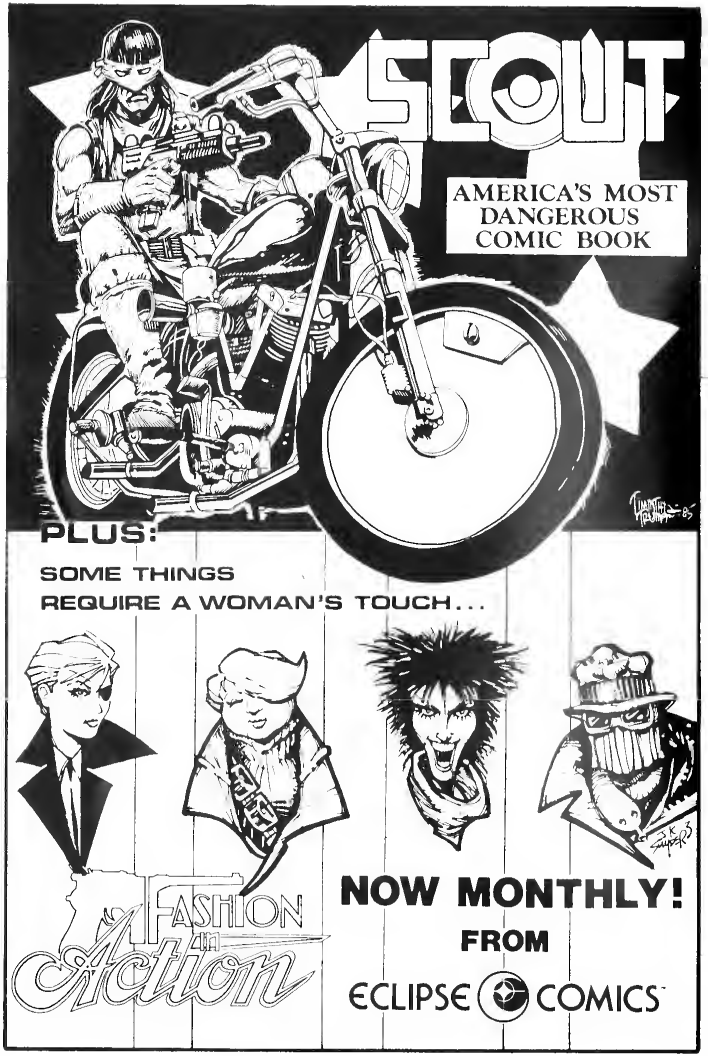
Previews of THE HERO ALLIANCE, WARRIORS OF THE SHADOW REALM, and ELECTRIC WARRIOR! Plus: JOHN BYRNE off the FF!

No. 87 • January 15 • $2.25 ($3.15 in Canada)

AMAZING HEROES



No. 87 **CONTENTS** **Jan. 15, 1986**

PREVIEW: Mark Waid gives the lowdown on Doug Moench and Jim Baikie's new ELECTRIC WARRIOR on page 19.

HEROES HISTORY: Wayne R. Smith continues his history of the Scarlet Witch, now in partnership with the android who would eventually become her husband, the Vision: page 25.

BONUS PREVIEW: Peter Quinones offers a look at the creative alliance behind Sirius's HERO ALLIANCE on page 31

Page 6: Editorial
A hefty mistake, time goes by, more
by Kim Thompson

Page 7: Newsflashes
John Byrne quits the Fantastic Four
by J. Collier

Page 12: Silly Cover
"MaX Factor."
by Gordon Frank

Page 13: Coming Distractions
On the stands from February 1-15
by J. Collier

Page 19: The Electric Warrior
Doug Moench strikes back, part one
by Mark Waid

Page 22: Lords of the Ultra-Realm
Doug Moench strikes back, part two
by Mark Waid

Page 25: Soulmates
A heroes history of the Vision and the Scarlet Witch
by Wayne R. Smith

Page 31: The Hero Alliance
A preview of the new team book
by Peter Quinones

Page 37: Comics in Review
A double-length installment
by R.A. Jones

Page 51: Amazing Readers
On letters, John Byrne, the JLA
by The Readers

Page 58: Small Press Watch
The marvels of Rick Geary, and *Aarrgh*
by Scott McCloud

OUR COVER:

A look at Doug Moench's startling new SF series from DC, ELECTRIC WARRIOR. Jim Baikie drew it, Kim Thompson colored it, and Dave Nelson separated it. Character ... DC Comics Inc.

AMAZING HEROES #87 (ISSN 0745-8509), January 15, 1986. Published twice monthly by Fantagraphics Books, Inc. Editorial and business offices: 359 Cornwall Road, Agoura, CA 91301. Office of publication: 25 Juniper Road, PO Box 707, Bethel CT 06801. Entire contents copyright © 1986 Fantagraphics Books, Inc. All rights reserved. No material herein may be copied or reproduced in any manner whatsoever (excluding brief excerpts used solely for review purposes) without written consent of the publisher. Second-class postage paid at Bethel CT and additional mailing offices.

POSTERMASTER: Please send Form 3579 to **AMAZING HEROES**, PO Box 787, Bethel CT 06801.

One year subscription in U.S. $52.80, outside U.S.A. $70.00 in U.S. funds. Single copy by mail: $3.00.

back issues

#1-3: SOLD OUT!

#4: Preview of FRANK MILLER's *Daredevil* with an original Miller DD cover! **$2.50**

#5: Ka Zar preview with BRENT ANDERSON cover. DITKO's Spider-Man! **$2.50**

#6: Moon Knight. SIENKIEWICZ cover painting. history of the Doom Patrol! **$2.50**

#7: GIL KANE. Micronauts cover/interview. checking in with JAN DUURSEMA! **$2.50**

#8: THUNDER Agents hero history by DAVID SINGER. FUJITAKE cover! **$2.50**

#9: Captain Carrot preview. SCOTT SHAW! cover. Captain Action history! **$2.50**

#10: Metal Men history with TERRY AUSTIN cover! Plus the Swamp Thing! **$2.50**

#11: Horror issue. *Night Force* preview. *Swamp Thing* history. COLAN cover! **$2.50**

#12: PAUL SMITH stars with a cover interview, and sketchbook! **$2.50**

#13: 100 page *Star Wars* issue with complete GOODWIN/WILLIAMSON story, original cover by KEVIN NOWLAN! 100 pages! **$3.00**

#14: *Camelot 3000* previewed. BOLLAND cover. Captain Marvel history. **$2.50**

#15: KEITH GIFFEN Legion of Super-Heroes cover and interview! **$2.50**

#16: *New Mutants* previewed. CLAREMONT interviewed. BOB McLEOD cover! **$2.50**

#17: Wolverine and the Marvel killers. Supergirl cover by KEVIN NOWLAN! **$2.50**

#18: *Nexus* spotlighted. special cover by STEVE RUDE! **$2.50**

#19: E-Man interview with PASKO and STATON. Staton cover of the E-Men! **$2.50**

#20: *Amethyst* preview with ERNIE COLON cover. FRED HEMBECK interview! **$2.50**

#21-22: SOLD OUT!

#23: *Crystar* featured with BLEVINS cover! Plus Challengers of the Unknown! **$2.50**

#24: DNAgents previewed with MEUGNIOT cover article on DD's women! **$2.50**

#25: MILLER's *Ronin* article/interview/cover, plus a complete *Star Hawks* tale! **$3.50**

#26: GRAY MORROW's *Edge of Chaos*! Also RON GOULART's 40s heroes! **$2.50**

#27: Batman issue! JIM APARO cover. MIKE BARR interview. Earth-2's Batman! **$2.50**

#28: *Sword of the Atom* preview with JAN STRNAD and cover artist GIL KANE! **$2.50**

#29: HOWARD CHAYKIN's *American Flagg!* previewed! Also *Alfalfa Flight!* **$2.50**

#30: Preview of *Thriller* with original VON EEDEN cover! Also John Jonzz! **$2.50**

#31: Big issue with complete *Star Hawks* story and TOM SUTTON interview! **$2.50**

#32: *Somerset Holmes*! Doc Doom history and Spider-Woman! **$2.50**

#33: Preview of First Comics *Mars* conclusion of Doom history! **$2.50**

#34: Preview of never-issued *Redeemer*, with KUBERT cover! Plus Enemy Ace! **$2.50**

#35: Inferior Five with superior cover by NOWLAN. also Jack Of Hearts! **$2.50**

#36: ROY THOMAS on World War II heroes cover by MACHLAN/ORDWAY! **$2.50**

#37: Rocketeer cover by and interview with DAVE STEVENS! Plus Skyborne! **$2.50**

#38: WeRP issue with WENDY PINI cover and WeRP article! **$2.50**

#39: 19th Preview issue! The beginning of a tradition—and still worth having! **$4.00**

#40: Sun Runners previewed, with PAT BRODERICK cover. Iron Man history. **$2.50**

#41: Red K history. WAYNE BORING interview and cover. Superman movies! **$2.50**

#42: Aardvark-Vanaheim issue with J. QUAGMIRE interview and jam cover! **$2.50**

#43: Warlock hero history & cosmic cover by WILLIE BLYBERG! Skyborne ends! **$2.50**

#44: Alien Legion previewed with cover by FRANK CIROCCO! **$2.50**

#45: ED HANNIGAN interviewed with great front cover inked by KLAUS JANSON! **$2.50**

#46: An index to the Legion of Super-Heroes! Plus *Power Pack* cover featured! **$2.50**

#47: KIRBY's *New Gods*! Special embarrassing cover color mistake issue! **$2.50**

#48: *Mr. X* previewed with JAIME HERNANDEZ cover! Also the BiZARROs! **$2.50**

#49: *Dalgoda* previewed with DENNIS FUJITAKE cover! Also Brazilian comics! **$2.50**

#50: 148 page issue! PEREZ interview/cover. O'NEIL and BARR on Batman! **$4.00**

#51: Continuity Comics with MICHAEL GOLDEN cover! Atomic Knights! **$2.50**

#52: British invasion issue with BRIAN BOLLAND *Judge Dredd* cover! **$2.50**

#53: BILL WILLINGHAM's *The Elementals* star with original Willingham cover! **$2.50**

#54-55: SOLD OUT!

#56: Heroines! Carol Danvers history. Jonni Thunder preview. NOWLAN cover! **$2.50**

#57: *Starstruck* preview with KALUTA watercolor cover! Power Man/Iron Fist! **$2.50**

#58: *Badger* and *Nexus* previewed with cover by BUTLER. Also *Secret Six*! **$2.50**

#59: MIKE ZECK talks about *Secret Wars* and previews a special cover! **$2.50**

#60: Four MANTLO series previewed with LEONARDI/MIGNOLA/AUSTIN cover! **$2.50**

#61: *Groo the Wanderer* preview. ARAGONES cover. Silver Surfer history! **$2.50**

#62: 1985 Preview issue! Even hotter than before! **$4.00**

#63: B.C. BOYER's *Masked Man* featured with cover! Plus Golden Age Index! **$2.50**

#64: Moon Knight history cover by CHRIS WARNER. preview of new series! **$2.50**

#65: Captain Victory, Black Dragon, and Solomon Kane. BOLTON issue! **$2.50**

#66: *Crisis on Infinite Earths*, with original GEORGE PEREZ cover! **$2.50**

#67: JIM SHOOTER on *Secret Wars II*, with BUSCEMA/LEIALOHA cover! **$2.50**

#68: Ambush Bug. DONALD SIMPSON holakes. GIFFEN/AUSTIN cover! **$2.50**

#69: MILLER interview with Elektra/Batman cover! Phantom Stranger history! **$2.50**

#70: *Squadron Supreme* previewed with new cover by HALE and BEAUTY! **$2.50**

#71: SOLD OUT!

#72: ENGLEHART's *Hawkeye/Vision/Scarlet Witch* previewed. HOWELL cover! **$2.50**

#73: *Eternals* preview and history with SAL BUSCEMA/ALGORDON cover! **$2.50**

#74: DAVE COCKRUM's *Futurians*, previewed, plus Supergirl eulogized! **$2.50**

#75: CHRIS CLAREMONT interviewed, also behind the scenes at *Robotech*! **$3.50**

#76: The Hulk/Alpha Flight switch cover by MIGNOLA and BYRNE! **$2.75**

#77: *Mr. Monster* preview, cover by GILBERTY LOEBS/BISSETTE/TOTLEBEN! **$2.75**

#78: Preview of the new *Outsiders*. APARO cover. KITCHEN interview! **$2.75**

#79: *DC Challenge* elucidated. CHUCK PATTON on Bwana Beast! JLA part 2! **$2.75**

#80: *Blood of the Beast* preview, full color cover! Also *Omega* and Byrne's FF! **$2.75**

#81: A preview of *Scout*, with a TIM TRUMAN cover! Plus a look at Atlas Comics! **$2.75**

#82: Marvel's mutants indexed, the new *Sun Runners*. Small Press debuts! **$2.75**

#83: *X-Factor* preview, cover by GUICE & LAYTON, plus part 2 of mutants index! **$2.75**

#84: The history of Batman, with a STEVE BISSETTE cover. Plus a look at Omac! **$2.75**

#85: The history of Batman concludes, plus an interview with ALAN DAVIS! **$2.75**

#86: *Hawkmoon* previewed with KAYANAN cover, plus a Scarlet Witch history! **$2.75**

#87: Previews of *Liberty Warrior* and *Lords of the Ultra Realm*. BAIKIE cover! **$2.75**

#88: CHAYKIN's *Shadow* previewed, a look at the new *American Flagg!* team! **$2.75**

Best of AH #1: Reprints from the first six issues, with new art from MILLER, BYRNE, more! **$4.50**

AH Preview Special #1: Summer 1985 issue, with more than 250 previews, and a SCOTT McCLOUD *Zot!* **$4.50**

AH Preview Special #2: Winter 1986 issue, with a STEVE RUDE cover! **$5.00**

ISN'T IT TIME YOU SUBSCRIBED?

After all, it's pretty risky trotting down to your local comics shoppe every two weeks to pick up the latest issue of ***Amazing Heroes***... you never know when an issue might have *gasp* *sold out* just before you get there.

So why not save yourself some potential grief and heartache and *subscribe*? Not only are you guaranteed to receive each and every issue... not only will they be dropped right on your very doorstep, sparing you many expensive and potentially embarrassing hours on the road... but, as if this all weren't enough, you'll actually *save money*!

That's right! You can actually save close to 1/3 off the cover price—and be insured against any price increases. (They do happen, you know.)

So subcribe today, and get your regular fix of ***Amazing Heroes'*** dynamic combination of news, reviews, histories, interviews, coming comics, cartoons, indexes, and all-around entertainment—sent directly to your home!

☐ Rush me the next 12 issues of ***Amazing Heroes*** plus the next ***Amazing Heroes Preview Special***, for the low subscription price of $21.95.

☐ Rush me the next 24 issues of ***AH***, plus the next two ***Preview Specials***, for the extra low price of $39.95.

If, at any time, I am not satisfied, you will refund my money for all unmailed issues.

Also, send me the following back issues of *AH*:

☐ AH Preview Special #1 ($4.50)	☐ #44 ($2.50)	☐ #66 ($2.50)
☐ AH Preview Special #2 ($5.00)	☐ #45 ($2.50)	☐ #69 ($2.50)
☐ Best of AH #1 ($4.50)	☐ #46 ($2.50)	☐ #70 ($2.50)
☐ # 4 ($2.50)	☐ #25 ($3.50)	☐ #47 ($2.50)	☐ #72 ($2.50)
☐ # 5 ($2.50)	☐ #26 ($2.50)	☐ #48 ($2.50)	☐ #73 ($2.50)
☐ # 6 ($2.50)	☐ #27 ($2.50)	☐ #49 ($2.50)	☐ #74 ($2.50)
☐ # 7 ($2.50)	☐ #28 ($2.50)	☐ #50 ($4.00)	☐ #75 ($3.50)
☐ # 8 ($2.50)	☐ #29 ($2.50)	☐ #51 ($2.50)	☐ #76 ($2.75)
☐ # 9 ($2.50)	☐ #30 ($2.50)	☐ #52 ($2.50)	☐ #77 ($2.75)
☐ #10 ($2.50)	☐ #31 ($3.50)	☐ #53 ($2.50)	☐ #78 ($2.75)
☐ #11 ($2.50)	☐ #32 ($2.50)	☐ #56 ($2.50)	☐ #79 ($2.75)
☐ #12 ($2.50)	☐ #33 ($2.50)	☐ #57 ($2.50)	☐ #80 ($2.75)
☐ #13 ($3.00)	☐ #34 ($2.50)	☐ #58 ($2.50)	☐ #81 ($2.75)
☐ #14 ($2.50)	☐ #35 ($2.50)	☐ #59 ($2.50)	☐ #82 ($2.75)
☐ #15 ($2.50)	☐ #36 ($2.50)	☐ #60 ($2.50)	☐ #83 ($2.75)
☐ #16 ($3.00)	☐ #37 ($2.50)	☐ #61 ($2.50)	☐ #84 ($2.75)
☐ #17 ($2.50)	☐ #38 ($2.50)	☐ #62 ($4.50)	☐ #85 ($2.75)
☐ #18 ($2.50)	☐ #39 ($4.00)	☐ #63 ($2.50)	☐ #86 ($2.75)
☐ #19 ($2.50)	☐ #40 ($2.50)	☐ #64 ($2.50)	☐ #87 ($2.75)
☐ #20 ($2.50)	☐ #41 ($2.50)	☐ #65 ($2.50)	☐ #88 ($2.75)
☐ #23 ($2.50)	☐ #42 ($2.50)	☐ #66 ($2.50)	☐ #89 ($2.75)
☐ #24 ($2.50)	☐ #43 ($2.50)	☐ #67 ($2.50)	☐ #90 ($2.75)

Send to:

AMAZING HEROES
(Subscription Department)
4359 Cornell Road
Agoura, CA 91301

NAME_____

ADDRESS_____

CITY_____

STATE_____ZIP_____

*(Make check or money order payable to **Amazing Heroes**. Outside the U.S., add $2.00—U.S. funds only, please.)*

STAFF

Managing Editor: Arthur Byron Cover
Art Director: Mark Bondurant
Executive Editor: Kim Thompson
News Correspondent: Tom Heintjes
Assistant Editor: Andrew Christie
Assistant Art Director: Dave Nelson
Typesetting: L.M. Gorell & Arlene Easter
Circulation: Julie Strnad
Publisher: Fantagraphics Books, Inc.
Printed at: Port Publications, WI

CONTRIBUTOR'S INFO

Art: Address all submissions to "Art Director, Amazing Heroes," 4359 Cornell Road, Agoura Hills, CA 91301. 2) Send Xeroxes first; originals will be requested upon acceptance. 3) Put your name and address on the back of each original. 4) Always enclose an S.A.S.E. for reply and return of your submissions.

Writing: 1) Address all submissions to "Editor, Amazing Heroes," 4359 Cornell Road, Agoura Hills, CA 91301. 2) Please enclose an S.A.S.E. for return of your manuscript—if you want it returned, that is. 3) All submissions will be read and answered within a month—or at least we'll try real hard. 4) Submissions must be typed; please double-space your copy. 5) Please keep a Xerox copy of your manuscript for yourself, and include your name, complete address, and phone number on the first page of the article.

AD RATES

Full page ad $150
[Format: 6" x 9"]

Half page ad $80
[Format: 3" x 9" (vertical); or 3¾" x 6¾" (island); or 6" x 4½" (horizontal)]

Third page ad $60
[Format: 1¾" x 9" (vertical); or 3¾" x 5" (island); or 6" x 3" (horizontal)]

DISTRIBUTORS

Andromeda Publications, Ltd. 367 Queen Street West, Toronto, Ontario M5V 2A4, Canada (416) 593-9694

Bud Plant, Inc. PO Box 1886, Grass Valley, CA 95945, U.S.A. (916) 273-9588

Capital City Distribution 2627 Perry Street, Madison, WI 53713 U.S.A. (608) 274-8987

Cavco, Inc. 114 "A" Bldg., 1401 Fairfax Trafficway, Kansas City, KS 66115, U.S.A. (608) 274-6987

Diamond Book Distributors 1720 Belmont Ave., Bay B-2, Baltimore, MD, 21207, U.S.A. (301) 298-1164

Fantagraphics Books 4359 Cornell Road, Agoura Hills, CA 91301, U.S.A. (818) 706-7606

Glenwood Distributors 124 Vandalia, Collinsville, IL 62234, U.S.A. (618) 345-1027

Second Genesis 1112 NE 21st Street, Portland, OR 97232 U.S.A. (503) 281-1821

Styx Comics Service 1858 Arlington Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba R2X 1W6, Canada (204) 586-6547

Titan Distributors, Inc. P.O. Box 250, London E3 4RT, ENGLAND (01) 836-6167

INDEX TO ADVERTISERS

Amazing Heroes 4-5
BAM Productions 41
Blackthorne Publishing 30
Comics Interview 42
DC Comics ..... back cover
Eclipse Comics 2
Fantagraphics Books 50-59
First Comics 18
Marvel Comics Group 11
Renegade Press 40

EDITORIAL by Kim Thompson

Let's get the apologies out of the way first and grovel for pardon from Wayne R. Smith and David H. Smith, the latter of whom got credit for the former's "Scarlet Witch/Quicksilver" article on last issue's contents page. Fortunately, the credit was correct on the article itself, but... Jeez! Next thing you know, I'll get Gerry Jones and R.A. Jones and Ken Jones all confused.

Of course, it wasn't my fault, since I was away on vacation. And it wasn't Art Cover's fault, since he doesn't have anything to do with stuff like the contents page. So we're looking for the guilty party and we'll clean his clock good when we catch him.

When this issue reaches you, I will have chosen the new *Amazing Heroes* editor. In case I haven't gotten around to writing back to those who *didn't* get the job by the time this sees print, my apologies, but I've been running real hard just to stay in place of late. In fact, I apologize to everyone to whom I owe a letter. Call me up and yell at me, I deserve it. Preferably not collect, though.

After sorting through the dozen-or-so letters from would-be editors, I must say I'm sorry I can hire only one of them. Most of you guys are articulate, literate, intelligent, knowledgeable, willling to work, and I'm sorry that I won't get to know you. So if you didn't get the brass ring, don't feel bad—it was a stiff competition. (Why do I feel more like a game-show host than an employer?)

By the way, there should be a *second* major announcement regarding the creative staff of *Amazing Heroes* coming along any day. It looks like early '86 will be a time of upheaval for your favorite li'l ol' 'zine (right around its fifth anniversary, too), but once all the waves have died down, I think we'll be cruising along at top speed.

Speaking of such things, I don't think I ever got around to welcoming Dave Nelson, the latest addition to the Fantagraphics Books team. Dave shoots most of our stats, does a lot of paste-up, as well as color-separations hand over fist—including the one on this issue. He also has a great record collection.

Speaking of which (the color separation, not the record collection), special thanks to Tom Ziuko, ace colorist for DC, who gave advice on the coloring on this issue's cover—and of course to Jim Baikie, who produced it on a very tight deadline. There was at least a week where I was convinced this issue wouldn't have a cover at all, let alone as snappy-looking a one as Jim's.

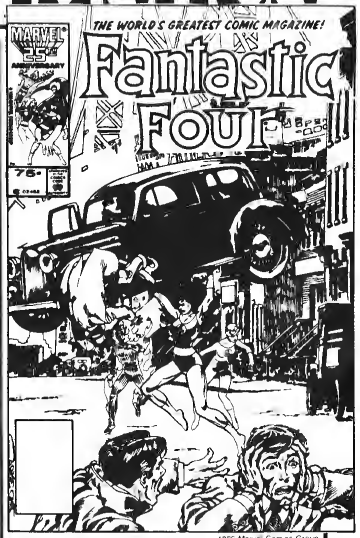
Next issue: A look at the dramatic new *Shadow* series Howard Chaykin is doing for DC, a chat with the new *American Flagg!* team, a Hero History of E-Man, and a look at medical care in the Legion of Super-Heroes' century. On sale 15 days from now, God willing. —KIM

Newsflashes

JOHN BYRNE QUITS FF: *Fantastic Four* #293 will be the last issue that JOHN BYRNE writes and pencils. Byrne said he will plot #s **294** and **295**, and that ROGER STERN will script them. After that, Byrne's affiliation with the FF will come to an end, after an uninterrupted run that began with **#232**—61 issues ago, believe it or not. Who will succeed Byrne on the artistic chores of the FF is not known. He added that he left the book because he had "reached his threshold on everything."

To fill the hole in Byrne's schedule that leaving the ***FF*** has created, he will begin working on a four-part adaptation of an EDMOND HAMILTON novel for WaRP Graphics—assuming the rights can be nailed down." Byrne said. Byrne would both script and pencil that series, and although no inker has been determined, Byrne said he has talked to TERRY AUSTIN, but that Austin has not decided whether to ink the book. No schedule has been set for the series.

MARVEL NEWS: In ***New Mutants*** **#40**, the young ones continue to train with the Hellions, while Magneto battles the Avengers. ***Squadron Supreme*** **#10** contains the deaths of two Squadron members. ***The Thing*** **#36** features the appearance of the new Ms. Marvel. The two-part gold Notebook storyline concludes in ***Web of Spider-Man*** **#15**, which also features the Black Fox and Chance. Master Pandemonium is true to his name in ***West Coast Avengers*** **#9**. DAVID ROSS, the new regular penciller on ***Alpha Flight***, makes his debut in **#35**, replacing MIKE MIGNOLA. That issue features the rebirth of Shaman. ***Captain America*** **#318** begins a three-part Scourge story, which has been set up throughout the Marvel Universe for the past 18 months. A new villain, Blue Streak, debuts. There's mayhem at the Mardi Gras as the Scarlet Witch's due date draws ever nearer in ***Vision and Scarlet Witch*** **#9**. Nick Fury guest stars in ***Fantastic Four*** **#291**, continuing the search (in 1936) for Reed Richards. Also: the issue features an hommage to the cover of ***Action Comics*** **#1**—this from JOHN BYRNE, who is preparing to take over control of Superman. In ***#292***, Fury tries to kill Adolf Hitler—and the FF have to stop him. ***New Mutants*** **#41** focuses on Danielle Moonstar as she goes it solo. The X-Men star in ***Questprobe*** **#4**, with script by CHRIS CLAREMONT, and art by JUNE BRIGMAN and TERRY AUSTIN. AIM has a plot to conquer a South American country, and only Iron Man can stop them, in ***Iron Man*** **#208**. The master of the evil mutants is revealed in ***X-Factor*** **#6**, as the villainous Owl appears. Thor guest-stars in ***Eternals*** **#10**. The Wraith meets his final fate in ***Amazing Spider-Man*** **#278**. The Avengers guest-star in ***Alpha Flight*** **#36** as Snowbird goes into labor at Mansion Alpha.



1986 Marvel Comics Group

BELOW: John Byrne leaves the ***Fantastic Four*** *in just a few months—but not before slipping a tribute to Superman and* ***Action*** *onto an FF cover (ABOVE RIGHT).*

Quicksilver battles the Inhumans and the Vision as Crystal fights for her life, in ***Vision and Scarlet Witch* #10**.

DC's two Batman editors: the recently-arrived Denny O'Neil and Dick Giordano

DC PERSONNEL NEWS: DENNY O'NEIL, one of Marvel's senior writers and editors, handed in his resignation to Marvel, and is now the editor of the Batman books, ***Batman*** and ***Detective***, at DC, as well as the ALAN MOORE/BRIAN BOLLAND Joker graphic novel. At the present time, O'Neil is not doing any writing for DC. Executive Editor DICK GIORDANO is still the editor of FRANK MILLER'S Batman project, ***Dark Knight***.

Also: ED SHUKIN, DC's vice-president of circulation, has been named president of the Comic Magazine Association of America.

*It's true! The Ambush Bug returns in a six-part mini-series, entitled (of course) **Son of Ambush Bug***

DC COMICS NEWS: Harbinger and Pariah, fresh from ***Crisis on Infinite Earths***, appear in ***DC Comics Presents* #94 . . . *Teles of the Teen Titans* #66** reprints JOSE LUIS GARCIA-LOPEZ'S first issue, from ***New Teen Titans* #7**, which reveals that secrets of Lilith's powers . . . In the ***Legion of Super-Heroes* #23**, Mon-El is forced back to the Phantom Zone when he becomes immune to his serum, and it's up to the Legion to find the cure . . . The format of the announced graphic novel, ***The Death of the Justice Society of America***, has been changed, as well as the price and title. It's now the ***Justice Society of America Special* #1**, in a 64-page comic-book format with a $2.50 price tag . . . ***Metalzoic*** remains a graphic novel, still by writer PAT MILLS and artist KEVIN O'NEILL, with a story about a future where mechanical "animals" rule a violent world . . . ***Booster Gold* #6** features the origin of the title character, and guest-stars Superman . . . ***Son of Ambush Bug* #1** kicks off a new 6-issue mini-series starring the Bug, ROBERT LOREN FLEMING writes and KEITH GIFFEN draws . . . ***Swamp Thing* #50** is both a double-sized and the conclusion to the "American Gothic" storyline that's been ongoing since **#38**,

*A panel from **Metalzoic**, a new DC graphic novel from British creators Pat Mills and Kevin O'Neill*

the issue will cost $1.25, and will be available in late March . . . Hex battles the Batman in ***Hex* #11** . . . In ***Superman* #421**, Superman and Mr. Mxyzptlk are trapped in a dimension that resembles the world of MTV . . . Firestorm is the focus of ***Secret Origins* #4**, which will be written by GERRY CONWAY, penciled by GEORGE TUSKA, and inked by PABLO MARCOS. Firestorm creator AL MILGROM will do the cover honors. The Outsiders battle Adolf Hitler (he gets around this month!) in ***Adventures of the Outsiders* #35**.

FIRST NEWS: KEITH GIFFEN is the guest penciller on ***Nexus* #22**, shipping the first week in March. RICK BRYANT will ink that issue, and regular writer MIKE BARON scripts . . . ***Grimjack* #24** is a special second anniversary issue, which will feature a new wraparound cover by former ***Grimjack*** artist TIMOTH TRUMAN. Truman and Grimjack creator JOHN OSTRANDER will produce a new story, and there will be a special Munden's Bar/Bob Violence cross-over by ***American Flagg!*** scripter and co-plotter STEVEN GRANT, with PAUL SMITH handling the art chores. Also, this issue will reprint the very first Grimjack story ever—"Mortal gods," which was serialized in ***Starslayer* #s 10** and **11**. This issue will contain 32 pages of story and art, with no interior ads, and ships the second week in March . . . In ***Badger* #13**, our psychotic hero teams up with his old pal, Judah the Hammer . . . Rob Lindsay finds he must avert a nuclear war in the guise of the super-hero Alter Ego, in ***Alter Ego* #2**.

COMICO NEWS: The night at the Styx Casino Hotel concludes for Kevin, Edsel, and Sean in ***Mage* #12**. Also in that issue: Grendel continues as Hunter Rose and Argent are no longer the only ones playing their deadly game of chess . . . As David Golden engages in a heated political discussion, his daughter Fathom, and her Elemental friends are battling a blazing skyscraper . . . In March, Comico will publish the ***Elementals Special* #1**. The book will feature Monolith in a look at child abuse and its effect on the victims. There will also be a page of text integrated with art by creator/artist BILL WILLINGHAM that will offer an address and phone number for people who wish further information on the subject. The ***Special*** will run 28 pages for $1.75.

*An **Elementals Special** focuses on the problem of child abuse*

***Adventures in the Mystwood**, a new series from Blackthorne*

BLACKTHORNE NEWS: ***Li'l Abner*** is the next in Blackthorne's series of newspaper reprint books. With 72 black-and-white pages for $5.95, the book reprints a long sequence of AL CAPP's classic strips . . . ***Adventures in the Mystwood*** is a new black-and-white comic by J. ARTHUR WILLIAMS. The genre is fantasy, the page count is 32, and the price is $2.00 . . . ***Tarzan, Book 2*** contains strips by BURNE HOGARTH featuring the classic story "Tarzan and the Barbarians." ***Little Nemo in Slumberland*** represents WINSOR

NEWSFLASHES

McCAY's classic humor strip ***Brenda Starr, Reporter*** features DALE MESSICK's character in the usual situations of intrigue, adventure, and romance. All of the three aforementioned books will be out in March, with 72 black-and-white pages at a cost of $5.95. ***Zombie Mystery Paintings*** showcases the more recent work of underground artist ROBERT WILLIAMS. With 96 pages plus 16 pages of full-color, the book boasts an introduction by ROBERT CRUMB, and a foreword by RAY ZONE. The book will cost $11.95 and will ship in March.

MIRAGE NEWS: RICHARD CORBEN will do a special four-page story that will appear in ***Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles #7*** as a color insert. The story was written and pencilled by KEVIN EASTMAN and was inked and toned by Corben.

To accommodate the cost of the color, the price on #7 will be raised by a quarter, to $1.75, for this issue. The book will be out in April.

RENEGADE NEWS: ***Revolver #5*** is the second issue in the three-part "Fantastic Fables" series with IRWIN HASEN taking honors. STEVE DITKO's "Crackling Blazer" will appear among others. Rather than the previously announced story, ***Flaming Carrot #11*** is called "State of Siege," wherein the Carrot leads a rebellion against the new provisional government. ***Silent Invasion*** #1 is a new science-fiction and mystery series by MICHAEL CHERKAS and LARRY HANCOCK. The story concerns a reporter's investigation into UFOs. ***Barefootz: The Comix Book Stories*** gathers together HOWARD CRUSE's stories that appeared in Marvel Comics' short-lived foray into undergrounds, ***Comix Book***. The five stories come together for a 36-page black-and-white comix with a new color painting by Cruse. ***Wordsmith*** #4 concerns Clay's childhood as an orphan, and his befriending of a young shoe-shine boy who is being sexually abused by his father. This is a special 32-page issue.

A SIRIUS HOME: ***Tales of the Sun Runners*** #1 is coming from Sirius Comics. The book had previously been published by Pacific Comics before that company folded, and by Eclipse, before disputes ended the book's star there. However, the first issue that will bear the Sirius imprint will ship in February, by the creative team of writer ROGER McKENZIE, and artists GLEN JOHNSON and JIM SINCLAIR. The book will cost $1.50.

CRITTERS UPDATE: Fantagraphics Books' new funny-animal title, ***Critters***, has undergone some changes. The three-part "Cutey Bunny" serial intended for **#1-3** has been replaced by a single 10-page story by Cutey creator JOSH OUAGMIRE and DAVE GARCIA, to appear in the first issue. The line-up for the first five issues is now as follows:

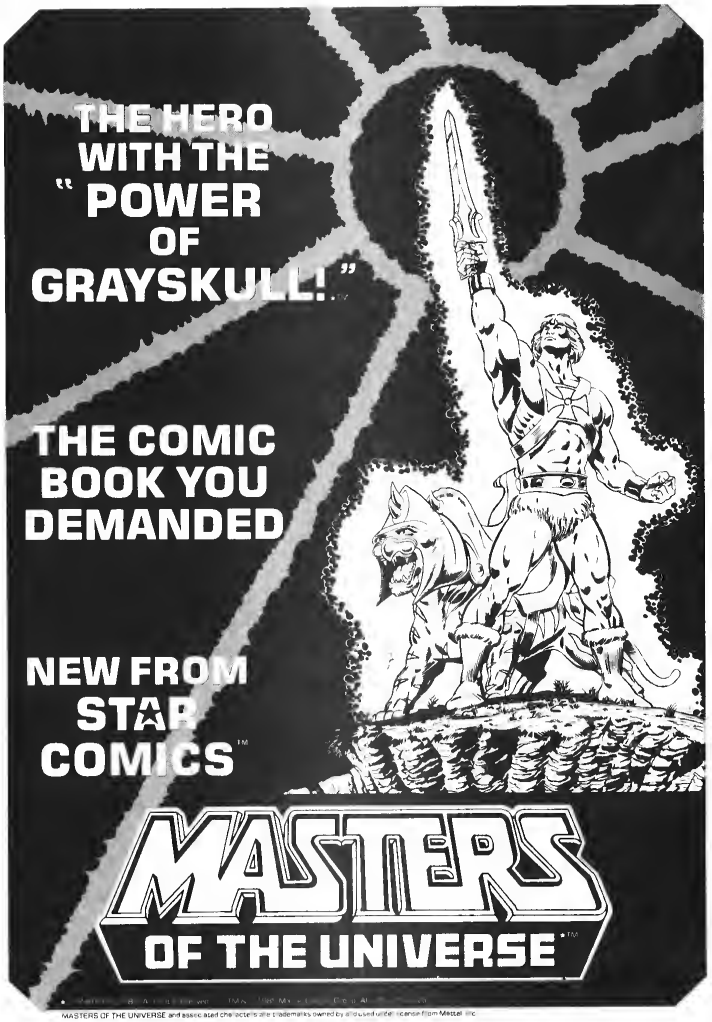
#1: "Cutey Bunny" by Ouagmire and Garcia, the premiere of "Birthright" by STEVEN A. GALLACCI, and "Usagi Yojimbo" by STAN SAKAI. Jam cover by all three artists.

#2: "Birthright" by Gallacci, who did the cover, the premiere of "Gnuff" by FREDDY MILTON, and a preview of "The Adventures of Captain Jack" by MIKE KAZALEH (which premieres later that month in its own book).

#3: "Birthright," "Gnuff," and "Usagi Yojimbo," with a Sakai cover.

#4: "Birthright" and "Gnuff" continue, a new story by ***Spaced's*** TOM STAZER, and a cover by KEN MACKLIN.

#5: The conclusion to "Gnuff," with a Milton cover. "Birthright" continues, and a "Nilson Groundthumper" story by Sakai.



MASTERS OF THE UNIVERSE and associated characters are trademarks owned by and used under license from Mattel, Inc.

Silly Cover

by Gordon Frank

Coming DISTRACTIONS

FEB. 1-15

AARDVARK-VANAHEIM

CEREBUS THE AARDVARK #53
Story/Art/Cover **Dave Sim**
Backgrounds **Gerhard**
[$1.70 direct-sales black-and-white comic, ships 2/15]

AMERICOMICS

DRAGONFLY #3
Dragonfly befriends an alien woman stranded on Earth
Story/Art **Rik Levins**
Inks **Ralph Cabrera**
Cover **Levins & Ordway**
[$1.75 direct-sales color comic, ships in Feb.]

FAZE 1 #3
The conclusion of the first storyline
Story/Art **Vic Bridges**
[$1.75 direct-sales color comic, ships in Feb.]

SENTINELS OF JUSTICE #3
Story **Bill Bleck**
Art **Larsen & Sanders**
[$1.75 direct-sales color comic, ships in Feb.]

BLACKTHORNE

JERRY IGER'S GOLDEN FEATURES #1
Featuring Flamingo
Story **Jerry Iger**
Art **Mett Beker**
Cover **Joe Chiodo**
[$2.00, black-and-white, direct-sales comic, ships in Feb.]

NERVOUS REX #4
Rex and Forkie meet up with Slocum, the lippy little snail
Story/Art/Cover **William Van Horn**
[$2.00, direct-sales, black-and-white comic, ships in Feb.]

SALIMBA IN 3-D #1
The adventures of a new jungle heroine
Story **Steve Perry**
Art **Paul Chadwick**
Inks **Palmer & Petterson**
[$2.25 direct-sales 3-D comic, ships in Feb.]

TALES OF THE JACKALOPE #1
What is a Jackalope? This comic will tell you.
Story/Art/Cover **R.L. Crabb**
[$2.00, direct-sales, black-and-white comic, ships in Feb.]

COMICO

ROBOTECH, THE MACROSS SAGA #9
Minmei enters a beauty contest, while Rick Hunter falls into a deadly trap.
Story **Jack Hermen**
Art **Byers & Poston**
[$1.50 direct-sales color comic, ships 2/7]

DC COMICS

AMETHYST #15
Castle Amethyst is destroyed and a royal leader dies!
Story **Giffen & Fleming**
Art/Cover **Colon & Kessel**
[75¢ newsstand color comic, ships 2/18, news-stand o/s 3/13]

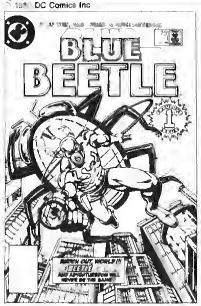
BATMAN #396
The climax of the Film Freak saga.
Story **Doug Moench**
Art/Cover **Tom Mandrake**
[75¢ newsstand color comic, ships 2/18, news-stand o/s 3/14]

BLUE BEETLE #1
The return of the classic Charlton super hero.
Story **Len Wein**
Art **Paris Cullins**
[75¢ newsstand color comic, ships 2/18, news-stand o/s 3/13]

DC COMICS PRESENTS #94
Superman, Harbinger, and Pariah are threatened by Volt Lord and Lady Quark.
Story **Randall & Greenberger**
Art **Tom Mendrake**
[75¢ newsstand color comic, ships 2/11, news-stand o/s 3/6]

ELECTRIC WARRIOR #2
An Electric Warrior rebels!
Story **Doug Moench**
Art/Cover **Jim Balkie**
[$1.50 direct-sales color comic, ships 2/18]

© 1986 DC Comics Inc



☐ **ELVIRA'S HOUSE OF MYSTERY #4**
"Frontierland Femme Fatale"
Story **Yee & Cavalieri**
Art **Bob Oksner**
[75¢ newsstand color comic; ships 2/18; news stand o/s 3/13]

☐ **FURY OF FIRESTORM #48**
Story **Gerry Conway**
Art/Cover **Brozowski & Machian**
[75¢ newsstand color comic; ships 2/11; news stand o/s 3/6]

☐ **HEX #10**
Hex battles a death cult
Story **Michael Fleisher**
Art **R. Wagner & Garzon**
[75¢ newsstand color comic; ships 2/11; news stand o/s 3/6]

☐ **JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA #251**
Batman is back in the JLA, but will even he beat the all-new Despero?
Story **Gerry Conway**
Art **McDonnell & Wray**
Cover **McDonnell & Giordano**
[75¢ newsstand color comic; ships 2/11; news stand o/s 3/6]

☐ **LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES #23**
Mon-El, immune to his serum, has been shunted back into the Phantom Zone. But can even Superboy find a cure for him?
Story **Paul Levitz**
Art **Lightle & Mahlstedt**
[$1.50 direct-sales color comic; ships 2/18]

☐ **'MAZING MAN #6**
A game at Shea Stadium, and a mugging in a men's room—all in a day's work for 'Mazing
Story **DeStefano & Rozakis**
Art **DeStefano & Kesel**
[75¢ newsstand color comic; ships 2/18; news stand o/s 3/13]

☐ **THE OUTSIDERS #8**
Halo, Looker, and Katana battle Japanese crime lords in Tokyo, with a special guest artist
Story **Mike W. Barr**
Art/Cover **Jan Duursema**
[$1.50 direct-sales color comic; ships 2/11]

☐ **SECRET ORIGINS #3**
The origin of Captain Marvel retold.
Story **Roy Thomas**
Art **Gil Kane**
[75¢ newsstand color comic; ships 2/18; news stand o/s 3/13]

☐ **STAR TREK #27**
A day in the life of the *Excelsior*.
Story **Bob Greenberger**
Art **Sutton & Villagran**
Cover **Gray Morrow**
[75¢ newsstand color comic; ships 2/18; news stand o/s 3/13]

☐ **SUPERMAN #420**
A high school students turns Superman's dreams into nightmares.
Story **Cary Bates**
Art **Swan & Hunt**
[75¢ newsstand color comic; ships 2/18; news stand o/s 3/13]

☐ **TALES OF THE TEEN TITANS #66**
The secrets of Lilith's powers are revealed.
(Reprinted from *Teen Titans #7*)
Story **Marv Wolfman**
Art **Garcia Lopez & Tanghal**
Cover **Marshall Rogers**
[75¢ newsstand color comic; ships 2/11; news stand o/s 3/6]

☐ **VIGILANTE #30**
The Vigilante sees a mobster killed.
Story **Paul Kupperberg**
Art **T. Smith & Magyar**
[$1.50 direct-sales color comic; ships 2/11]

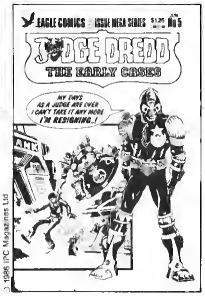
DC GRAPHIC NOVEL

☐ **THE MERCHANTS OF VENUS**
A search for treasure and a fight for survival on Venus.
Story **Paul Andersen**
Adaptation **Victor Petersen**
Cover **Neil McPheeters**
[$5.95 direct-sales color graphic novel; ships 2/11]

© 1986 DC Comics Inc

EAGLE COMICS

☐ **JUDGE DREDD: THE EARLY CASES #5**
A book-length saga of Judge Dredd's time on the moon.
Story **Wagner & Grant**
Art/Cover **Ian Gibson**
[$1.75 direct-sales color comic; ships 2/11]



© 1986 IPC Magazines Ltd

☐ **2000 A.D. MONTHLY #3**
The Dark Judges are on the loose in Mega-City.
Story **Wagner & Grant**
Art **Brett Ewins**
"D.R. and Quinch Get Back to Nature"
The happy-go-lucky duo take over a holiday camp.
Story **Alan Moore**
Art **Alan Davis**
Plus the continuation of "Skizz"
Story **Alan Moore**
Art **Jim Baikie**
Cover **Brian Bolland**
[$1.25 direct-sales Mando color comic; ships 2/11]

ECLIPSE COMICS

☐ **ALIEN ENCOUNTERS #5**
"Night of the Monkey"
Story/Art **Richard Corben**
Plus work by **Burgard, Beckum, Dorman**, and others.
Cover **David Dorman**
[$1.75 direct-sales color comic; ships 2/4]

☐ **MR. MONSTER #5**
"The Demon of Destiny Drive"
A giant flesh-eating amoeba decides to adopt Mr. Monster as its daddy.
Story/Layouts **Michael T. Gilbert**
Finished Art **Bill Loebs**
[$1.75 direct-sales full color comic; ships 2/11]

☐ **SCOUT #4**
Scout and Missy find themselves in more trouble than usual.
All by **Timothy Truman**
[$1.75 direct-sales color comic; ships 2/4]

☐ **THE TWISTED TALES OF BRUCE JONES #1**
Reprinting classic '60s and '70s tales by **Bruce Jones**, including "Boobs, the Jungle Boy," "Outside In," and "Stopped."
Cover **Bruce Jones**
[$1.75 direct-sales color comic; ships 2/11]

FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS

☐ **CRITTERS #1**
"Bounty Hunter"
Usagi Yojimbo teams up with a rhino mercenary.
Story/Art **Stan Sakai**
"The Day After Forever"
Domino and her dog Bongo read a Cutey Bunny story. Guest starring Bob Hope and Bing Crosby.
Story/Pencils **J. Quagmire**
Inks **Dave Garcia**
"Birthright"
Chapter One of the SF adventure series. A kingdom crumbles.
Story/Art **Steven A. Gallacci**
[$2.00 black-and-white direct-sales comic; ships 2/7]

© 1986 Gallacci/Quagmire/Sakai

LLOYD LLEWELLYN #2
Three tales of the hipper-than-thou detective: "Monster from the Edge of Nowhere," "Lloyd Llewellyn, Egghead," and a visit from Lloyd's hillbilly cousin Floyd.
Story/Art/Cover **Daniel Clowes**
[$2.25 direct-sales black-and-white magazine; ships 2/10]

THREAT #1
"Bob Mercenary: Family Ties"
Bob tries desperately to get out of hock.
Story **Dave Harrison**
Art/Cover **Jay Geldhof**
"Zone: A Retelling of Events"
Why does a giant mutant roam the swamp?
Story/Art **M. Kraiger**
"Enigma Funnies: Origins"
Short tales of a mutant-killer.
Story/Art **Gary Fields**
"The Holo Bros.: Groundwork"
A s.t. of thieving brothers steal a valuable gem.
Story/Art **Jim Rohn**
[$2.25 direct-sales black-and-white magazine; ships 2/7]

© 1986 Jay Geldhof

FANTASY GENERAL

☐ **MARAUDERS OF THE BLACK SUN #1**
Plot/Cover **Grant Fausey**
Story **Stroble & Hopen**
Art **Russ Martin**
[$1.75 direct-sales black-and-white comic; ships in Feb.]

FIRST COMICS

☐ **THE BADGER #12**
"Blood on the Snow"
Story **Mike Baron**
Art **Rainhold & K. Wilson**
Plus a "Zoomtown" chapter.
Story **Mike Baron**
Art **Wagner & Martin**
[$1.75 direct-sales color comic; ships 2/11]

☐ **GRIMJACK #23**
"Demon Blood Part One"
Story **John Ostrander**
Art **Sutton & Guinan**
Plus "Love Me Tender," a Munden's Bar story.
Story/Art **Phil Foglio**
Cover **Tom Sutton**
[$1.25 direct-sales Mando color comic; ships 2/7]

☐ **NEXUS #21**
"The War for Ylum"
Story **Mike Baron**
Art **Rude & Nyberg**
Cover **Steve Rude**
Plus "Dignity," starring Clonazone the Hilariator.
Story **Mike Baron**
Art **Mark A. Nelson**
[$1.75 direct-sales color comic; ships 2/11]

☐ **WHISPER #1**
"Dystopia in the Year Zero"
Story **Steven Grant**
Art/Cover **Dell Barras**
[$1.25 direct-sales color Mando comic; ships 2/11]

© 1986 First Comics, Inc.

INDEPENDENT

☐ **THE OFFICIAL DOOM PATROL INDEX #2**
The first of two issues.
Compiled by **Murray Ward**
Cover **John Byrne**
[$1.50 direct-sales color comic; ships 2/4]

© 1986 First Comics, Inc.

KITCHEN SINK

☐ **DEATH RATTLE #3**
"Dead Man's Chest"
Story/Art/Cover **Doug Hansen**
"Bulto, the Cosmic Slug"
Story/Art **Jaxon**
[$2.00 direct-sales color comic; ships in Feb.]

1:46 Doug Hansen

MEGATON MAN #8
Megaton Man goes back to college. Also: the continuation of "Border Worlds".
All by ..... **Donald Simpson**
[$2.00 direct-sales full-color comic; ships in Feb.]

THE SPIRIT #16
Reprinting four more classic Spirit stories in black-and-white, including "Pinhead" and "Escape".
All by ..... **Will Eisner**
[$1.95 direct-sales black-and-white comic; ships in Feb.]

STEVE CANYON IN 3-D #1
A never-before-reprinted 1954 adventure, rendered in 3-D.
All by ..... **Milton Caniff**
[$2.25 3-D direct-sales comic book; ships in Feb.]

LODESTONE

EVANGELINE SPECIAL #1
This includes a partial reprinting of the two Comico issues, and new material leading into the first issue of the Lodestone edition.
Story ..... **Chuck Dixon**
Art ..... **Judith Hunt**
[$2.00 48-page direct-sales color comic; ships in Feb.]

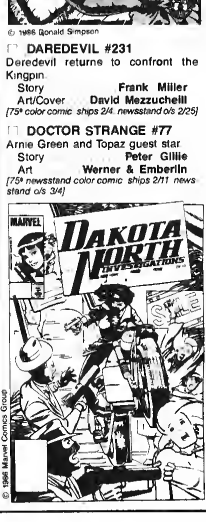
MARVEL COMICS

ALPHA FLIGHT #35
Featuring the rebirth of Shamen.
Story ..... **Bill Mantlo**
Art ..... **Rose & Teleoc**
Cover ..... **David Ross**
[75¢ color comic; ships 2/11; newsstand o/s 3/4]

AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #277
"Cry of the Wendigo"
Story/Art ..... **Charles Vess**
"My Dinner With Kingpin"
A story tying in with current *Daredevil* continuity.
Story ..... **Tom DeFalco**
Art ..... **David Mazzucchelli**
Cover ..... **Charles Vess**
[75¢ color comic; ships 2/11; newsstand o/s 3/4]

CAPTAIN AMERICA #318
The beginning of the "Scourge" trilogy.
Story ..... **Mark Gruenwald**
Art ..... **Neary & Janke**
Cover ..... **Neary & Rubinstein**
[75¢ color comic; ships 2/11; newsstand o/s 3/4]

DAKOTA NORTH #1
An "adventure-detective" yarn.
Story ..... **Martha Thomases**
Art/Cover ..... **Tony Salmons**
[75¢ color comic; ships 2/4; newsstand o/s 2/25]



© 1986 Donald Simpson

DAREDEVIL #231
Daredevil returns to confront the Kingpin.
Story ..... **Frank Miller**
Art/Cover ..... **David Mazzucchelli**
[75¢ color comic; ships 2/4; newsstand o/s 2/25]

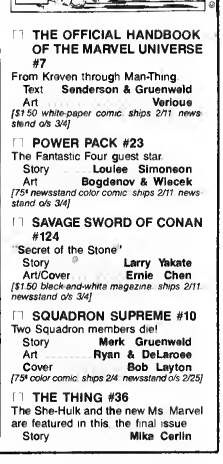
DOCTOR STRANGE #77
Arnie Green and Topaz guest star.
Story ..... **Peter Gillis**
Art ..... **Werner & Emberlin**
[75¢ newsstand color comic; ships 2/11; newsstand o/s 3/4]

© 1986 Marvel Comics Group

FANTASTIC FOUR INDEX #7
Indexing another bunch of issues.
Editor ..... **George Olshevsky**
[$1.25 direct-sales Mando color comic; ships 2/11]

FIRESTAR #4
Story ..... **Tom DeFalco**
Art ..... **Wilshire & Leialoha**
Cover ..... **Mary Wilshire**
[75¢ newsstand color comic; ships 2/11; newsstand o/s 3/4]

NEW MUTANTS #40
The New Mutants continue their training with the Hellions.
Story ..... **Chris Claremont**
Art/Cover ..... **Butch Guice**
[75¢ color comic; ships 2/4; newsstand o/s 2/25]



© 1986 Marvel Comics Group

THE OFFICIAL HANDBOOK OF THE MARVEL UNIVERSE #7
From Kraven through Man-Thing.
Text ..... **Sanderson & Gruenwald**
Art ..... **Various**
[$1.50 white-paper comic; ships 2/11; newsstand o/s 3/4]

POWER PACK #23
The Fantastic Four guest star.
Story ..... **Louise Simonson**
Art ..... **Bogdanov & Wiecek**
[75¢ newsstand color comic; ships 2/11; newsstand o/s 3/4]

SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN #124
"Secret of the Stone"
Story ..... **Larry Yakate**
Art/Cover ..... **Ernie Chen**
[$1.50 black-and-white magazine; ships 2/11; newsstand o/s 3/4]

SQUADRON SUPREME #10
Two Squadron members die!
Story ..... **Mark Gruenwald**
Art ..... **Ryan & DeLarose**
Cover ..... **Bob Layton**
[75¢ color comic; ships 2/4; newsstand o/s 2/25]

THE THING #36
The She-Hulk and the new Ms. Marvel are featured in this, the final issue.
Story ..... **Mike Carlin**
Art ..... **Paul Neary**
[75¢ color comic; ships 2/4; newsstand o/s 2/25]

VISION AND THE SCARLET WITCH #9
Mayhem at the Mardi Gras.
Story ..... **Steve Englehart**
Art/Cover ..... **Howell & Springer**
[75¢ color comic; ships 2/11; newsstand o/s 3/4]

WEB OF SPIDER-MAN #15
The gold notebook storyline concludes.
Story ..... **David Michelinie**
Art ..... **Harris & Baker**
Cover ..... **Beachum & Rubinstein**
[75¢ color comic; ships 2/4; newsstand o/s 2/25]

WEST COAST AVENGERS #9
Master Pandemonium is the villain.
Story ..... **Steve Englehart**
Art/Cover ..... **Milgrom & Sinnott**
[75¢ color comic; ships 2/4; newsstand o/s 2/25]

© 1986 Marvel Comics Group

MARVEL EPIC COMICS

BOZZ CHRONICLES #3
A mad scientist is looking for "volunteers" to send through time.
Story ..... **David Michelinie**
Art ..... **Blevins & Williamson**
Cover ..... **Bret Blevins**
[$1.50 direct-sales color comic; ships 2/11]

GROO THE WANDERER #16
All by ..... **Sergio Aragones**
Not to mention ..... **Mark Evanier**
[75¢ color comic; ships 2/11; newsstand o/s 2/25]

MOONSHADOW #7
Moonshadow's happy life in the palace of overshadowed by troubles.
Story ..... **J.M. DeMatteis**
Art/Cover ..... **Jon Jay Muth**
[$1.50 direct-sales color comic; ships 2/4]

MARVEL STAR COMICS

FRAGGLE ROCK #7
Story ..... **Stan Kay**
Art/Cover ..... **Merle Severin**
[75¢ color comic; ships 2/4; newsstand o/s 2/25]

HEATHCLIFF #8
Story ..... **DeCesare**
Art ..... **Kremer & Roettcher**
Cover ..... **Warren Kremer**
[75¢ newsstand color comic; ships 2/11; newsstand o/s 3/4]

MISTY #4
"Misty's Big Day," "Misty's Fairy Tale," and "Hair Today, Gone Tomorrow."
Story/Art/Cover ..... **Trina Robbins**
[75¢ newsstand color comic; ships 2/4; newsstand o/s 2/25]

THUNDERCATS #4
Introducing a new Thundercat, Lynxana.
Story ..... **David Michelinie**
Art/Cover ..... **Mooney & Breeding**
[75¢ newsstand color comic; ships 2/4; newsstand o/s 2/25]

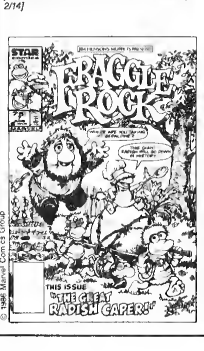
MARVEL U.K.

CAPTAIN BRITAIN #15
Story ..... **Jamie Delano**
Art/Cover ..... **Alan Davis**
Plus a story featuring The Cherubim.
Story ..... **Mike Collins**
Art ..... **Collins & Farmer**
[$1.75 direct-sales black-and-white magazine; ships in Feb.]

DOCTOR WHO #110
In addition to interviews, previews, and articles, this issue features a *Dr. Who* strip by **Mex Stockbridge** and **John Ridgway**.
[$2.25 direct-sales black-and-white magazine; ships in Feb.]

RENEGADE PRESS

FLAMING CARROT #11
"The Dead Dog Leaped Up and Flew Around the Room."
The Carrot begins working on getting his inheritance back on its feet.
Story/Art ..... **Bob Burden**
[$1.70 direct-sales black-and-white comic; ships 2/14]



© 1986 Marvel Comics Group

MAXWELL MOUSE FOLLIES #1
"Maxwell's Back!"
Max meets his true love Monica and starts his nightclub, Chez Maxwell's.
Story/Art ..... **Joe Sindardi**
[$1.70 direct-sales black-and-white comic; ships 2/14]

REVOLVER #4
"Hobgoblin"
Story ..... **Bill DuBay**
Art ..... **Lee Elias**
"Goblin"
Story ..... **Bill DuBay**
Art ..... **Luis Bermejo**
[$1.70 direct-sales black-and-white comic; ships 2/14]

WORDSMITH #4
"Jimmy Carter"
Clay Washburn gets into an argument with a Nazi-sympathetic writer.
Story ..... **Dave Derrigo**
Art ..... **R.G. Taylor**
[$1.70 direct-sales black-and-white comic; ships 2/14]

SIRIUS COMICS

THE HERO ALLIANCE SPECIAL EDITION #1
What's it really like being a super hero?
Story ..... **Compiti/Juaire/Palmer**
Art ..... **Bert Sears**
[$1.50 direct-sales color comic; ships in Feb.]

© 1986 WaRP Graphics

WaRP GRAPHICS

THUNDERBUNNY #5
Thunderbunny visits the Rutland, Vermont parade. Also: the introduction of a new heroine.
Story ..... **Martin Greim**
Art ..... **Kato & Buniek**
[$1.50 direct-sales black-and-white comic; ships in Feb.]

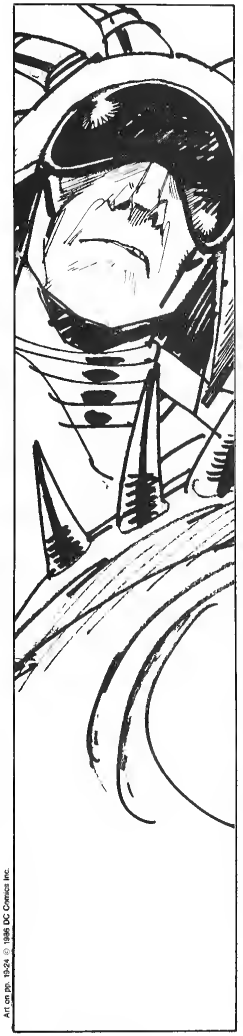
SPECIAL ANNIVERSARY ISSUE!

You're all invited to
Grimjack's birthday party!
Hosted by: **Timothy Truman**
Paul Smith
John Ostrander
Steven Grant

Grimjack #24
On sale in March

FIRST COMICS®

1985 FIRST COMICS, INC.



The Electric Warrior

Doug Moench and Jim Baikie bring to DC a different future, a different concept, and an extremely different hero.

by Mark Waid

Regular readers of *Amazing Heroes* will recognize this direct-sales "deluxe format" title as a science fiction series that has been on the drawing boards for quite some time. Part of the overly-long gestation period on *Electric Warrior* has stemmed from creator Doug Moench's—and DC Comics'—desire to find an illustrator who would be willing to commit himself to the series for some time, so as to avoid the problem of round-robin artists that has plagued a number of DC's past direct-sales books.

Now, after an exhaustive search, British artist Jim Baikie has been contracted to illustrate the first 12 issues, and Moench is very excited about his work. "Baikie is currently working three or four issues ahead, and he's so pleased with what he's seen so far that he has expressed an interest in staying on for even longer." Baikie is best known to American audiences for his work on the two issues of *Vigilante* written by Alan Moore, and his "Skizz" (also done with Moore) will soon begin appearing in Eagle Comics' *2000 A.D. Monthly*.

The City

Electric Warrior takes place in and around the City, and is set in the future, in a time after civilization has suffered a tremendous societal split. A great number of people have left the City to become "futuristic hippies," while the remaining City-dwellers live in what Moench refers to as a "vertical hierarchy," a network of enormously tall buildings. The dregs of society live in the bottom layers of the City, while the middle-class resides halfway up, and, of course, the elite class known as the "Technocrats" resides in the uppermost stratum.

How big is the City? "Big. Manhattan, if you included Brooklyn and the Bronx." However, there's still plenty of room for the Primmies in the area between cities. "Because the cities have grown vertically, there's no longer what we call 'suburban sprawl.' Plus, there is very fast travel, so it doesn't matter if the cities are widely spaced and you've got this sort of skysled commuting or whatever. The cities are very self-contained.

Art on pp. 19-24 © 1986 DC Comics Inc.

The view from the Upper Class citizenry in ELECTRIC WARRIOR's future

"But they're falling apart, and they're falling apart from the bottom up. The people down there in the warrens, the slums, are rioting and sabotaging, eating away at the roots of the City.

Those residents of the lower City—the "rebel element," so to speak—are known as the "Zigs." They're what I had called the "Nigs," but that had to be changed. The mandate came down after issue #1 was lettered, so I had to go with either "Nils" or "Zigs." Originally, I ran the term "Nigs" by all the black guys at DC, and none of them were offended by it. Denys Cowan, for one, strongly *supported* it. The point was that these were the guys on the bottom, and if you're extrapolating into a future where you have an oppressed group at the bottom of society, and they're going to call themselves something, they'll do it in sort of an ironic defiance. A lot of blacks call each other "nigger," but they obviously don't mean what the term has come to mean among white people. That's the kind of thing I figured these characters would do. They are the "niggers" of this future world, and that's how they're treated."

Primmies

Another dramatic factor in *Electric Warrior* will be the role of the "Primmies," deliberately primitive, back-to-the-earth type guys" who have lived in the City in the past, have been sophisticated, but have decided that they have had enough of technology. Consequently, they have moved out into the wilds and elected to go back to the earth and model themselves on past lifestyles and civilizations like the Vikings and the American Indians.

Moench says that Citydwellers are welcome to join the Primmies, but anyone who plans to join—well, "the very first thing they have to do is to throw all of their technological trash into this big pit, a symbolic way of turning their back on the City forever. "Take Manhattan, just give me that countryside.

The most prominent Primmie in the series will be a man named Derek Two Shadow, who is introduced in the first issue. The nature of his involvement in the strip is Moench's secret—for now.

Also in that first issue, the Primmies get a visit from an anthropologist named Quintana. She, says Moench, is a woman from the City—"incidentally, also the City magistrate's lover"—who has come to study the Primmies. They're exactly what the City needs—fiercely independent and self-sufficient people who could serve as the catalyst for offsetting the decay of the city. "Unfortunately—these people don't want to have anything to *do* with the city."

9-03

The Electric Warriors are a police force instigated by the Technocrats "to keep the Zigs in line." There are many of them, operating around the city in cadres of five. Moench asks that we pay specific attention to one of them: "9-03 is defective, and he can't figure out *what* happened. Maybe the last time there was maintenance, a couple of wires were crossed. Or maybe it's that they're using enzymes in the bio-chips which are self-replenishing, self-multiplying, and make the connections with their bodies better, and maybe these enzymes have mutated and bridged spontaneous connections of their own, making him in effect human, in the sense—and only in the sense—that 9-03 now has a conscience."

About 9-03's "transformation," Moench says that "there's hints of it in #1, #2 is when he makes the break, and #3 is where he *really* begins to wreak havoc." Essentially, 9-03 goes off with his Warrior cadre in order to quell a riot. The Zigs have taken over a power station, and have in their possession

Rebel "Zigs" living in squalor at ground level.

"blooey-get," which should be pretty self-explanatory and which will blow up the generator and cut off power to that part of the City. "Of course, the Technocrats don't know that the explosives are down there. 9-03 is the only one who realizes that. 'Hey, if we kill them while they've got that explosive, we'll also be destroying the power station.'" The other Electric Warriors—who are merely machines obeying orders—ignore his protestations, and the terrible death that ensues is what finally pushes 9-03, in Moench's words, "over the brink."

"He refuses to murder one of the rioting Zigs, makes his break from his cadre, and the Technocrats above suddenly say, 'Oh my God, we've got a defective Warrior down there helping them, we've got to get *rid* of him.'" It isn't long before the Technocrats send other Warriors after 9-03, "but now, because he can reason, he can make booby traps and stuff better than the others," and begins to stave off his predators—in the process, becoming the hero of the Zigs.

There's also a love story happening between 9-03 and this ancient woman Zig, this incredibly old crone down there who's salty and takes no sass, and they sort of fall for each other. Kind of strange."

The Ad Campaign

In past *Amazing Heroes Preview* issues (in every past *Amazing Heroes Preview* issue), Electric Warrior has been described as "a new science fiction series deliberately designed to put the reader through a wrenching change every four to five issues." However, when it came time to formulate an advertising campaign, everyone connected with the book realized that they had a formidable task ahead of them. Moench summed up DC's dilemma:

"Sure, I have a 'grand design' in mind, but I'm not sure that telling it is the best way to push the book. If I tell people, 'you're going to be surprised all the time,' then *nothing* will be a surprise.

"What we finally worked out is that there'll be giveaway blueprints of one model of Electric Warrior at the comics shops. [The flyer] will look like a real blueprint, with cutaway views and descriptive boxes, all of that stuff. Then there'll be a poster linked to this giveaway which will show a real Electric Warrior ripping out of a stack of blueprints."

Is Moench concerned that casual browsers will lump *Electric Warrior* together with all the other comics spawned by the Japanese robots craze? "I didn't really think of that—I'm not doing [the book] to cash in on it, that's for sure. An Electric Warrior doesn't have the typical look that those things have," and no doubt Bakie's art style will provide sharp contrast to the stories in *Transformers*, *Robotech*, *Macross*, et al.

Moench will serve as both writer and editor of *Electric Warrior* which is set to appear in January as part of DC Comics' deluxe line. He predicts a long and interesting life for the hooks and the characters it portrays. ●

ABOVE: 9-03's sole friend, an aged Zig crone. LEFT: A Bakie sketch of Amber Brightstar, Simon Soaring's Primmie lover.

LORDS of the ULTRA-REALM

Doug Moench and Pat Broderick explore the nature of good and evil in a new six-part limited series from DC Comics.

"*Lords of the Ultra-Realm* is what you might call a cross between superheroes and science-fantasy," says Doug Moench, writer/editor/co-creator of the six-issue mini-series scheduled to premiere in February. Illustrated by *Sunrunners* artist Pat Broderick, *Lords* will be a direct-sales "deluxe format" book that will follow the adventures of a man from today's society, a society filled with moral ambiguity and gray values, who is thrust into another world called the Ultra-Realm—in Moench's words, "a world of black and white, good and evil, stark contrast."

Genesis

"A while back, Pat [Broderick] and I decided to do something together on spec just for our own satisfaction, and to try and sell it to *Heavy Metal* or someplace—at that time, there were a lot of new comics companies starting up. The project got bogged down because we were both busy, and it sort of got lost in the shuffle of other things," such as Moench's fling in Hollywood doing a screenplay for *Red Sonja* and Broderick's stint on *Firestorm*.

"Then I quit Marvel, and went over to DC. Pat was in the office one day, and said, 'Why don't we try to do this as a regular book for DC?' Pat had pencilled nine pages. I showed them to Dick [Giordano], and he approved it. We decided to do it as a six-issue mini-series.

"About that time, Pat ended up doing six issues of *Detective Comics* with me, which pushed the project back even further—but, finally, a year ago, we got to really start working on it."

The Lords Themselves

The Ultra-Realm is a parallel world, a planet half in perpetual shadow, half in perpetual light, with only a twilight band around the middle where 14 kingdoms pair off equidistantly. Each kingdom is ruled by one of the 14 Lords of the Ultra-Realm—seven good men, and seven evil ones.

Moench took great care in choosing the evil Lords and their "light side" counterparts. "I tried to personify the seven deadly sins. They don't exactly match, but I do have War, Madness, Greed, Death, Hate, Rage, and Chaos." On the "good" side, the Prince of Enlightenment corresponds to the Prince of Madness, Peace offsets War, Love is the counterpart of Hate, and so forth.

Each prince possesses a mystical mirror which serves as both a gateway to Earth and as a way for its possessing ruler to periodically "renew" himself and his energies. "While the Prince of Bliss is renewing himself—which amounts to sticking his hands into the mirror up to the wrists, taking strength from his reflection—the Prince of Rage attacks him from the depths of his mirror and kills Bliss's reflection, his soul. Rage then steps out of the shattered mirror and makes short work of the body, too.

"Now the gateway to Earth is opened, and its corresponding side is a funhouse mirror in the Darkland Arcade on 8th Avenue in New York, where a man named Michael Savage has stopped in."

Prince of a Guy

At this point, readers are introduced to the main character of *Lords of the Ultra-Realm*—"Michael Savage, an ex-prizefighter and Vietnam vet who has recently come back home under a cloud of suspicion. Though he claims to have been a prisoner of war all this time, there is evidence that he has, instead, been collaborating extensively with the enemy. Not even the readers are sure which is really the case. His old trainer tries to get him back into the ring, but the last thing he wants to do now is fight."

Unfortunately for Savage, he has little choice when he is challenged by a group of street punks in the arcade. Just as they begin to fight, the mirror-gateway is broken and the soul of the Prince of Rage takes over the leader of the street gang. At that same instant, Savage is hurled into the Ultra-Realm.

"Savage is thrown through the gateway. There, he becomes resurrected as Falkon, the fallen Prince of Bliss, and doesn't know what the hell is going on." He is then forced to take up the mantle of Bliss, counterpart to Rage, becoming a being whom the other Lords of the Ultra-Realm refer to as "Savage Bliss." "He becomes a contradiction in terms. Coming from the gray world of earth anyway, he brings mingled light and darkness to this resurrection of the murdered Prince of Bliss," a circumstance that will tip the scales in the battle of Light vs. Darkness.

Through a Glass Darkly

Again, the Ultra-Realm is what Moench describes as a world of clean-cut good and evil, a situation which would seem to make the decisions of right and wrong easier—but it's actually more muddled *there* than on Earth. The only thing that kept things clear-cut was that fine edge of eternal opposition and balance. Once that balance shifted the slightest bit, it became a mess, and Earth feels it.

"To Michael Savage, the Ultra-Realm is nothing but a living manifestation of all of Earth's collective fears/fantasies/hopes/dreams/nightmares. If the Ultra-Realm falls completely to the Lords of Darkness, that will be reflected as in a 'mirror' on Earth, whose people will descend into war and madness and chaos and so on; if Earth, on the other hand, falls under the domination of Darkness, then the Ultra-Realm will reflect that.

"So, if Savage fights on the side of light and starts knocking off the Lords of Darkness, then the balance will shift towards the light. The 'good' Lords can take over the Ultra-Realm and turn it into all light, all their way. But eventually he finds out what will happen once the Light Lords take over.

by Mark Waid

A study in contracts: The seven Princes of Darkness....

...and the seven Princes of Light, with Michael Savage in their midst.

"Everyone on Earth will then die in a blaze of ecstasy and go to Heaven.

"He doesn't know whether that sounds good to him or not."

Moreover, as time passes, Savage's entire mission for the side of "good" begins to sound a little cockeyed to him. "He is asked by the Lords of Light to kill the Lords of Darkness. How can this be a 'good' thing to do? Savage isn't entirely sure that the Princes of Light are on the 'right' side—and we aren't sure that he is."

Savage Tales

"There are 14 archetype souls on Earth at any given time," although the people who harbor these souls aren't aware of their singularity or importance—they don't *know* that they're special. "The readers are at first led to believe that this whole thing—the chaos unleashed in the Ultra-Realm—has been precipitated by Rage treacherously striking down Bliss from the depths of the mirror—but actually, some other event on Earth has precipitated it, something connected to the ten-year mystery of Savage.

"*Lords of the Ultra-Realm* is a double-narrative. It's not only what happens to [Savage] on Ultra-Realm, it's what happens on Earth after he disappears." There, the cast includes not only Savage's former trainer, but another former heavyweight boxer, and a female reporter who is determined to get the shole story on Savage, even if it means travelling back to Kampuchea to do it.

Most of the storyline takes place in the Ultra-Realm, as Savage Bliss battles the six remaining Lords of Darkness. However, the story-time spent on Eath is expanded somewhat when, in issue #3, Savage/Falkon crosses back into Earth in pursuit of Rage, who has abandoned the body of the gang leader and become a Hell's Angel. Or, as Moench explains it, "Rage, who by killing Bliss has stolen some of Bliss' power, decides to scout out the final conquest of Earth."

"One of the climaxes to the series is the revelation of what actually happened to Michael Savage during his time away from America, and how that ties into what has happened in the Ultra-Realm. Savage is a little too quick to come to grips with this bizarre thing that has happened to him, masters his new powers a little too easily.

"In the end, I give away all the answers. Just think about the dilemma of Earth and the Ultra-Realm, which keeps swinging back and forth." ●

Soulmates

Hero History of the Vision & Scarlet Witch

"Love is for souls, not bodies," observed the Scarlet Witch as she accepted the Vision's marriage proposal in *Giant Size Avengers* #4 (1975). Her statement was significant in light of the fact that her husband to be was an android, or "synthozoid," described by Dr. Henry Pym as "every inch a human being, except that all his bodily organs are constructed of synthetic materials." Vision's mind was a "maze of printed circuits" based on the "brain patterns" of the supposedly-dead Wonder Man. Wanda, a mutant herself, knew what it meant to be different in a world of often narrow-minded humans and gladly gave her love to a being some thought to be less than human. She sensed beneath the artificial body the lonely and sensitive soul which is the Vision.

Torch Song Trilogy

Vision made his debut in *Avengers* #57, 1968, the creation of writer Roy Thomas and artists John Buscema and George Klein. Vision was the first Marvel super-hero created solely to be a member of the Avengers. Although some details of the character's origin were discovered in the following issue, the full story remained unknown until Steve Englehart revealed it in *Avengers* #133-135. For clarity's sake it will be best to take the events in order of occurrence rather than of revelation, beginning with the original Human Torch.

The android who would become the Vision was created with a far more human appearance, including blond hair, by Professor Phineas T. Horton in 1939 (*Marvel Comics* #1). Horton's creation had one dangerous flaw—he burst into flame upon contact with oxygen. Upon the recommendation of frightened colleagues, Horton sealed the android in cement, but the so-called Human Torch escaped his prison to begin a long crimefighting career. The Torch had a mutant teenager named Toro for a sidekick and joined forces with Captain America and the Sub-

by Wayne R. Smith

Mariner to form the Invaders during World War Two. After the war they formed the All-Winners Squad. Eventually, the Torch was overcome by criminals using a Soviet invention, "solution X-R," which doused his flame and paralyzed his body.

Buried in the Nevada desert by his captors, the Torch was exposed to radiation from an atomic bomb test. His flame thus restored, the android resumed his heroic career until the radiation sped up his metablolism dangerously. Returning to the desert, the Torch went nova and remained inert for years until he was reactivated by the Mad Thinker as a weapon against the Fantastic Four (in their fourth Special, 1966). The Thinker's sentinent computer, Quasimodo, killed the Torch, and Reed Richards decided the Thinker's abandoned lab was a fitting resting place for the artificial man.

Meanwhile, another noted scientist named Henry Pym was conducting his own experiments with artificial intelligence. Sometime shortly after *Avengers* #42, Pym constructed a primitive robot which accidentally developed emotions and self-awareness at a rate which took Pym by surprise. The robot overpowered Pym and hypnotically erased the Avenger's memory of its creation. In a self-described "mad orgy of transformation," the robot rebuilt itself into the deadly Ultron-5. (The preceding was revealed in *Avengers* #58, although Ultron-5 first attacked Pym and his allies in issues #54-55).

Horton's creation had one dangerous flaw—he burst into flame on contact with oxygen.

Ultron-5 wanted a powerful pawn to use against the Avengers and, more importantly, it wanted a son. Contacting the Mad Thinker in hopes of securing an android, Ultron-5 learned of the inert Human Torch and appropriated his body. However, Ultron-5 was a robot and lacked the knowledge to refurbish the Torch to Ultron-5's specifications.

The Torch now became more inhuman in appearance, with scarlet skin (a joke to remind Ultron-5 of the Torch's former heroic career), a bald head, and new, more powerful, abilities. Horton threw a wrench in the works, however, by allowing the Torch to retain his identity—contrary to Ultron's orders—for Horton also wanted a son. He paid for this with his life. Horrified at his new form and his creator's murder, the Torch lashed out at Ultron-5 but, ignorant of his new powers, proved no match for the robot. Ultron-5 proceeded to erase the Torch's mind, replacing it with a new persona based on Henry Pym's computer tape of Wonder Man's "brain pattern."

(Simon Williams, Wonder Man, was given super-powers by Baron Zemo in *Avengers* #9 to infiltrate and destroy the super-team. Williams repented and apparently gave his life to save the Avengers; he was merely comatose and revived in issue #151).

Behold a Vision

The red-faced android now had no name, no purpose but to serve Ultron-5. His new powers involved total control over his body's molecular density: he could become virtually intangible to walk through walls or fly, or massively heavy and strong in a diamond-hard form. His power source was solar radiation, absorbed through a tear-shaped gem upon his brow. Ultron-5 sent his slave to attack Janet Van Dyne, the Wasp, in *Avengers* #57 and he blasted her with "thermoscopic" heat rays from his eyes (later modified to be a beam from his forhead gem). The Wasp unwittingly christened the android when she cried: "It's like some unearthly vision!" The Vision mysteriously collapsed in the midst of his attack and was taken to Avenger's headquarters.

Henry Pym determined that Jan's assailant was an android. The Vision revived and assaulted the Avengers headquarters, then suddenly stopped and began to question his mission. Finally, he agreed to lead the heroes to Ultron-5's base of operations.

This was the rogue robot's plan all along. With Hawkeye, Wasp, and the Black Panther trapped in a room of closing walls and Goliath felled by a giant robot, the Vision faced his supposed creator alone in pitched combat. Ultron-5 ridiculed human emotions, yet it was its own anger that led the robot to hurl itself at and through Vision's intangible form to its own destruction. Freeing the Avengers, the Vision requested membership.

To Become an Avenger

After an issue-long debate that included Captain America, Thor, and Iron Man, Vision was inducted officially into the group in issue #58. During the course of their investigation, the Avengers learned of Ultron-5's origin and the robot's use of the Williams "brain patterns" for Vision's mind. Nothing was learned yet of Vision's connection to the android Torch. Although the others commented on the cold, unemotional manner of their new member, Henry Pym realized the Vision's request for a moment alone was because "even an android can cry."

Vision proved to be a loyal Avenger, with one nearly-fatal exception. Ultron had programmed the Vision to betray his allies and reconstruct the robot out of the invincible alloy Adamantium (issues #66-68). Under Ultron's control, Vision even battled his friends before regaining his senses and attacked his evil master. The android fell in battle, but a clever plan conceived by Yellowjacket drove Ultron to suicide by filling his evil electronic mind with the phrase, "thou shall not kill."

The android Avenger was frequently uncomfortable among his new friends. His unexpressive, toneless voice and cold, logical manner made him seem more inhuman that he actually was. Vision was in fact afraid of the emotions he felt and did not understand, and his emotional growth was further inhibited by a control crystal implanted in his brain by Ultron (as revealed in *Avengers* #254). Despite these difficulties, Vision could not deny his growing attraction for Wanda, the Scarlet Witch.

Star-Crossed Love

They first met in *Avengers* #76 when Wanda and her brother Quicksilver rejoined the team. The mutant siblings had had long Avenger careers, beginning in issue #16; prior to that they had been pawns of the malevolent Magneto. Wanda's first words to her future husband were: "Flee, whoever you are," as a warning that no one could stop the barbarian King Arkon, who hoped to blow up the Earth to provide a light source for his own darkened world. The first evidence of their mutual attraction can be found in *Avengers* #80-81.

Vision had rescued the Avengers from the Grim Reaper earlier in issue #79 by leading the mad super-villain to believe that he, Vision, was Wonder Man reincarnated. The Reaper was Simon Williams's brother, who vowed to kill the Avengers as revenge for Wonder Man's supposed death yet freed them from a death trap to rescue Vision. The Reaper would later become obsessed with the idea that Vision was in fact his brother. Vision was so taken aback by his own tactic that he temporarily resigned from the Avengers.

Now alone, the android wandered the streets disguised in a human face-mask and civilian clothing until the very next issue (#80) when he and Goliath (Clint Barton) took up the cause of the American Indian super-hero, Red Wolf. Wanda impulsively decided to accompany them on their trek west. Vision displayed unusual concern for Wanda when she was injured and even battled Goliath to insure her safety in issue #81. Ten issues later, the couple openly admitted their feelings.

When Vision and Wanda were prisoners of Ronan the Accuser in issue #91, they expressed their love and almost kissed, but Vision pulled away. "It must not be," he declared, "because I'm an android, a mere copy of a human being." But once begun (by writer Roy Thomas and artist Sal Buscema) the romance could not be denied, despite Vision's misgivings about an android-mutant match. Wanda's bigoted brother Pietro resented Vision and tried unsuccessfully to dissuade his sister from the love affair. It may have occurred to Quicksilver that his formerly submissive sister was growing up and away from his domineering influence and that was what he truly resented.

Pietro confronted Wanda in issue #99 and she told him just what he didn't want to hear—she truly loved

The Vision finds a home with the Avengers and discovers a startling truth.

The first attempt at love between Wanda and the Vision.

the Vision. Hawkeye further complicated things at that time by making a romantic play for Wanda himself. Hawkeye never really loved Wanda; he simply was on the rebound from being jilted by the Black Widow.

Hawkeye soon relented and Quicksilver was removed as an obstacle when he went to live among the Inhumans in their city, Attilan. For a time he was thought to be missing in action, which caused Wanda considerable anxiety. Vision surrendered to his emotions and comforted her in issue #108. They had come together at last.

Their love affair became public knowledge in issue #113, when a New York crowd saw the couple locked in an ardent embrace. Reaction was mixed but largely favorable; one gang of bigots, however, mortally wounded Vision in a suicide bomb attack. The so-called Living Bombs could not abide the possibility of a mutant-android offspring and tried to murder Vision at the cost of their own lives. The combined efforts of Tony Stark, Don Blake, and the Black Panther saved Vision's life but no one could save the defeated bigots as they chose death over dishonor.

Although he maintained a coldly logical facade, Vision was not above violent rage. He vented his full fury upon the Silver Surfer, apparently the cause of an injury to Wanda in *Avengers* #116. The android was developing the full range of human emotions.

Wanda's attraction to the Vision proves interesting in light of her previous romantic interests. Although nothing came of her crushes on Captain America and Hercules, a pattern emerged: Wanda may have been seeking a man much like her brother—strong and set apart from human society. The often-shunned and rejected Scarlet Witch sought a man who could understand her feelings of alienation and insecurity, which—is why the ordinary human Hawkeye never had a chance with her. Vision appealed to her as a truly different man, a kindred spirit more as lonely and detached than as anyone she had ever known.

Standing Up for Herself

After Quicksilver's wedding (*Fantastic Four* #150), Reed and Sue Richards's elderly babysitter Agatha Harkness offered to teach Wanda true witchcraft in *Avengers* #128. Wanda went up against a supervillain all alone for the first time when she overcame Necrodamus in that same story. But while Wanda learned new skills behind a locked door, a new threat to her relationship with Vision appeared in the form of Mantis, a Vietnamese martial arts expert. Mantis fell in with the Avengers in issue #114 as their guest and the lover to their new member, the Swordsman. Perceiving weakness in the Swordsman, Mantis began to flirt with a somewhat confused Vision.

Wanda underwent a transformation in more than her super-powers during this period; she became assertive, where once she had been totally submissive to her brother and men in general. She even told off Vision in issue #125 over Mantis's flirtation with him. With Pietro gone, Wanda began to stand up for herself and go after what she wanted from life, including Vision. This new characterization was developed by then-Avengers scripter Steve Englehart who used the interrelationship of the team members to more fully develop each Avenger. Mantis went on to fulfill her destiny as the celestial Madonna and gave up her designs on the vision.

Kang the Conqueror desired to possess Mantis and towards that end conspired with his future self, Immortus, to pluck from the past several dead man to launch against the Avengers in issue #131. This legion of the Unliving included the original Human Torch, who eventually threw off Kang's control. Trying to repair the badly damaged Vision, the Torch recognized his own transformed body. After Kang's defeat (*Giant-Size Avengers* #3) a repentant Immortus offered to send Vision and Mantis back in time to learn their true origins. These two journeys through the decades were told in *Avengers* #133-135.

By *Giant-Size Avengers* #4, Wanda had completed her training and was able to take on even Dormammu when he tried to subjugate her will. Combining her mutant power to influence probabilities with a magical control over organic matter, the Scarlet Witch was more powerful than ever. Vision now felt confident enough in his own identity to propose marriage to Wanda. The wedding was held in that same story with Immortus officiating. It was a double-ceremony, including the wedding of Mantis to an intelligent tree. After a honeymoon in Rurutu, French Polynesia, Vision and Wanda returned to the Avengers in issue #140. Vision appeared "out of uniform" and in bathing trunks for the first time in #137.

Married Life

To Vision and the Avengers' shock, Wonder Man turned up alive in issue #151 (Englehart's last issue). Simon Williams had merely been in a deathlike coma all this time and was accepted into the Avengers. Wonder Man's resurrection caused vision to feel fresh insecurity, which led him to an uncharacteristic jealous rage in issue #158. Wrongly accusing Williams of an interest in Wanda, Vision fought with him until Iron Man broke things up and delivered an off-panel lecture that calmed everyone down. This story was by Jim Shooter, who took over the Avengers after Gerry Conway. Englehart's immediate successor, departed.

Shooter brough back the Grim Reaper in issue #160; this time the mad villain conducted a mock trial to determine just who was really his resurrected brother. Vision declared he was not Simon Williams: "What difference if I have the same brain waves! I am unique! I am the Vision—and thus I am content!" The android thus laid his self-doubt to rest and became firm friends with Wonder Man.

The happy couple continued as Avengers until deciding it was time to strike out on their own in issue #211. This led to their own four-issue limited series, which included several significant events. Vision came to think of Wonder Man as his brother when Simon gave him an energy transfusion to save his life. Pietro and Wanda reunited in joy over Pietro's newborn baby Luna, and Magneto revealed to the siblings that he was their true father. Most recently, Vision attempted to conquer the world for its own good and finally rid himself of Ultron's control crystal, opening the way for full emotional growth. Wherever this new development takes the Vision, his wife will be by his side. Theirs is a love of the soul, transcending physical bodies and making them, in the end, very human indeed. ●

BLACKTHORNE PUBLISHING, INC.

PRESENTS

GOLDYN in 3-D

The BLACKTHORNE 3-D LINE is on a Roll!

November brings you another outstanding 3-D release!

This is the story of a time traveler called Goldyn. Goldyn is part of a scientific expedition that travels back in time to document events for historic purposes. The year is 218 B.C., the place is the Minor City-State of Assur in the Haurian Empire. The expedition arrives in the middle of a battle, instead, of being onlookers, they become participants.

Beautifully rendered by Walter Stuart, a professional medical illustrator, this is his showcase work in the comic market. Well paced action.

Edited by Steve Schanes
3-D Process by RAY ZONE!
32 pages with color covers.

©1985 Walter Stuart

GOLDYN in 3-D $2.25

SEND TO: **BLACKTHORNE PUBLISHING, INC.** 786 Blackthorne Avenue, El Cajon, CA 92020

Enclose a check or money order for total, plus 75¢ postage and handling per book ordered. CA residents add 6% sales tax. Checks must clear bank prior to shipping.

• *Available Soon. Reserve your copy now!*

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP _____

☐ ART OF PIERANGELO BOOG	$8.95	☐ ANNIE book 1	$5.95
• ☐ THE IGER COMIC KINGDOM	$8.95	☐ ON STAGE book 1	$5.95
• ☐ BENCHLEY book 1	$5.95	• ☐ BLONDIE book 1	$5.95
☐ BRODM HILDA book 1	$5.95	☐ SMOKEY STOVER book 1	$5.95
☐ DICK TRACY book 1	$5.95	☐ STAR HAWKS book 1	$5.95
☐ DICK TRACY book 2	$5.95	☐ STORIES OF THE WEST book 1	$5.95
☐ DICK TRACY book 3	$5.95	☐ STORIES OF THE WEST book 2	$5.95
• ☐ DICK TRACY book 4	$5.95	• ☐ TALES OF THE GREEN BERET book 1	$5.95
☐ GASOLINE ALLEY book 1	$5.95	• ☐ BETTY BOOP book 1	$5.95
☐ LIL ABNER book 1	$5.95	• ☐ KATZENJAMMER KIDS book 1	$5.95

IGER CLASSIC FIRST ISSUE REPRINT BOOKS

☐ SHEENA #1	$5.95
☐ NATIONAL COMICS #1	$5.95
☐ JUMBO COMICS #1	$5.95
☐ WINGS COMICS #1	$5.95

NEW COMICS

☐ NERVOUS REX #1	$2.00
☐ NERVOUS REX #2	$2.00
• ☐ NERVOUS REX #3	$2.00
• ☐ NERVOUS REX #4	$2.00
☐ SHEENA 3-D	$2.00
☐ MERLIN REALM 3-D	$2.25
• ☐ 3-D HEROES	$2.25
• ☐ GOLDYN 3-D	$2.25
• ☐ BIZARRE 3-D ZONE	$2.25
• ☐ SALIMBA 3-D #1	$2.50
• ☐ SALIMBA 3-D #2	$2.50

Sirius Comics plans to join the big leagues with a dynamic new super-team title—in a dynamic new super-world

"Sirius," according to my American Heritage Dictionary, is "A star in the constellation Canis Major, the *brightest* star in the sky [my italics]." Sirius Comics hopes to be the brightest star among the comic racks. However, they are a brand new company, with only one title currently in release.

This brings us to another meaning of Sirius. The star is also called "Canicula" or "the Dog Star." Sirius might be called the "Underdog." They have attracted talented new people like Kevin Juaire, David Campiti and Bart Sears, yet also have such professionals as Bo Hampton, Carlos Garzon, Roger McKenzie, and Rick Bryant lending their considerable talents and expertise to their expanding line of projects.

Nineteen eighty-six is the year of Halley's Comet, another bright object in the heavens. Sirius Comics' guiding lights, Leo Collado, the President, and brother Juan, the Publisher, also hope it will be their year. They have been discriminating in selecting their new projects, knowing that quality is the key. But they are very proud of the projects now on the drawing boards.

They have picked up Roger McKenzie's *Sun-Runner's* book after McKenzie pulled it from Eclipse. They have a few more issues to go in their six-issue flagship title, *Greylore*. For Spring release, they have a 3-D book planned, a sword-and-sorcery book entitled *Against BlackShard: 3-D The Saga of Sketch*. But their current and most ambitious project is a new "team book" named *The Hero Alliance*.

We managed to corner the co-creators of the book and have them talk about their new project.

Artwork pp. 31-36 ©1985 Sirius Comics

by Peter Quinones

A Different Kind of Group

Who is Victor? A 45-year-old owner of a health spa chain, or the world's mightiest superhero? And where has the world's first super-hero, Golden Guardman, gone? And Gemini Plus, StarCorp Man, the lovely Chic—who are they? They are all members of The Hero Alliance.

The Hero Alliance is another collaboration between writers David Campiti and Kevin Juaire. These two have worked on projects together for DC, Pacific, Marvel and, most recently, on the Greylore title for Sirius.

Why bother with another team book? Campiti and Juaire set out to analyze why heroes might get together in the first place, and whether they could come up with a new approach to a team book that would be more than just having a variety of gaudy costumes crowding the panels. Kevin Juaire was kind enough to grant us a peek at the notes he used to formulate the series. The following passages will show how the team concept became a springboard for a series based on the interaction of the characters of superheroes. Here's Kevin:

The Super group is not a formal gathering of heroes but rather of individuals who naturally seek one another's company because of their common ground. A possibility could be a special counseling group to help heroes deal with their unique lifestyle ... having a Thor or Superman-type character would really negate the need for the rest of the group in crime prevention situations (this is why the common bond is companionship) ... If the group is really informal they really don't know that much about one another. It could be interesting to find that this gathering of super powered individuals includes a few villains (hey, even they need to adjust to being different) ... Depending on how many hero types will populate this world, a story about the group taking over a situation where the "local hero" felt he was doing fine could be amusing (so much time is spent on one upmanship, the villains end up sitting back and watching)

Maybe the book should have a very loose format, being about any hero or heroes at different times; new heroes can be introduced on a constant basis, deaths can occur, even changes of heart from villain to hero, grudge matches (just like pro-wrestling) ... A constant stream of characters will provide endless plot potential. Each person brings with them a personal history around which a story can be built.

What about per deed bounties or reward to heroes (this way they'll be competing for the same money, gives more of an edge to relationships) ... A hero dates a nice normal girl but his buddy tells him "after a relationship with a super chick, you'll never go back." Or a guy has a stud rep because he's Joe Macho hero but he's really zilch in bed. The key to the hook is in putting the focus on the individuals and not the group aspect (this is merely a device for allowing a larger variety of stories and characters)

Remember popularity will vary and focus can be adjusted accordingly ... Some heroes should have families and kids, some divorced, whatever normal people have or do should apply. This book should explore every aspect there is and deal with any heroes one can think of.

With those thoughts, they set about forming the Hero Alliance.

Origins and Such

One thing the creators behind *Hero Alliance* don't plan to do is to start the series with origin stories. They are going under the assumption that these heroes have been fighting for years, and that there is the weight of history behind them. Of course they will provide all the necessary information needed to get to know the characters, but most of the background will be spooned out in small doses. However, the creators usually have character backgrounds all worked out for their own knowledge, if only to keep inconsistencies from popping up. Some notes about Victor's origin:

"He was but a child. His family of five came to Earth for reasons he was too young to understand. He had a mother, a father, and two sisters—one sister older, one younger. His father, a good man, had fled his home world, his mother, a dreamer, a free spirit, longed for more than this planet Earth could give her ... Perhaps their coming was a mistake ... they had trouble adjusting to our society ... The elder sister died, either in an assassination a la Hinkley or by "legal" tinkering ... They were stronger than we. Their thoughts could cause mental things, in a minor way, to happen ... the raising of a cup ... the turning of a knob ... the drop of a skirt (for temptation as well as danger came to them) ... Father chose Victor ... Slowly, he opened Victor's mind, so that victor could do more than they could ... He could leap far ... then finally levitate at great speed ... he sensed his pain, and his fears, and his mind protected him wioth a field of force that seemed to be a hardness of skin ... yet he could feel a brush, a touch, the hint of adolescent urgings. His other powers grew. He could do almost anything, because he believed he could ... Then father died ... So mother worked on her son ... inbuing him with a different sensibility ... a lyrical, masterful touch, that enhanced his powers by being harmonious with the dreams, the thoughts, the wishes of the people ... "If only I could fly ..." That, and the wishes of strength, of victory, of heroism burns in every man's heart. They lived inside Victor. Abandoned as a child, and adopted to live in a small town, Victor never knows the source of his power ... never knew his mother and younger sister still lived.

Victor is the archetype superhero: he can do anything better than anybody else. But in his secret identity, unlike say, Billy Batson, he is still a powerful figure. As an ordinary citizen he is Vic Torrence, owner of health spas, a Jack La Lanne figure who is also the perfect human specimen. Since his powers are psychically generated, he can alter his features, his body, slightly so that he looks different from Victor the superhero. But for all his powers, he makes mistakes. He misjudges a man whom he admired all of his life, a great hero who was Victor's ideal.

And who was this man? A man that we meet only briefly at the end of his life—The Golden Guardman. He was the first superhero. It was the Golden Guardman that set the precedents that superheroes needed to hide behind a mask and a fancy name. He would be a man of great abilities, the most admired man on the planet until he mysteriously disappears. We readers knows where he has gone and why, and we also find that he is a failure as a parent. He has two kids, a daughter and a son. The daughter admires her father and wants to be like him. She will eventually approach Victor with that idea, for she was born with some of the powers her father possessed (interestingly, the father's powers come from a helmet he built).

But the son hates the father. "His son sees the whole hero thing as a front, as a lie," Campiti explains. "His father goes out treating the world wonderfully, yet he has no kind words for his own son. So it puts the son's life into the opposite direction. He no longer wants to sacrifice for his father, keeping his identity a secret." The family believes that he inherited none of the powers, but they are wrong. And when he finds his father's Golden Helmet, things get really rough for the neophyte team.

As a child, Victor receives the burden of his destiny.

The Guardsman's son steals his father's helmet and, as Rage, embarks on a career of evil.

Other Characters

Some other members of the team are a set of twins—Gemini-Plus. Juaire reveals their powers. "Not the most original concept, but then what is? A woman gives birth to triplets, one is stillborn, and through the miracle of comic book science, the life-force of the stillborn child is shared by the surviving twins. By a psychic relationship, they are able to distribute the life-force so that one at a time they could use the energy and be a super-powered being." Of course, problems always arise when something is shared. And in this case, their personalities are substantially different so that they argue a lot, yet in order to use the power, they have to cooperate with one another. This gets more interesting when their younger sister has different powers.

There will be a few women members (among them the daughter of the Guardman), and one of the more interesting is Chic. In her civilian identity she is a high-fashion model on the level of Kim Alexis. She has a subliminal power that makes everybody see her as they want to see her. And even though she can't fool a camera, she is beautiful and professional enough that the product is well-above adequate, and they blame themselves for not being able to capture such perfection. She gets work, though, because she brings out the best in these professionals.

But Chic doesn't quite know what to make of herself. She doesn't really know who she is.

Other characters who will round out the core group are The Daughter of the Guardman and Rage, The Star Corp Man, a rookie cop endowed with powers from the friendly STAR-CORP aliens. And a variety of other heroes will drop by as needed.

Making the Deal

But how does one go about selling a new series, especially to a new company? Campiti explains, "We have an agent, Mike Friedrich, of Star*Reach Publishing. I turn out a quarterly list as Campiti and Associates and offer projects that any comic book company might be interested in picking up. One of these lists had *Greylore* on it and about seven or eight superteams.

"Now, Sirius Comics was new, offering real money, and they wanted a commercial team book. They wanted something well-written, but with all the trappings of a superhero team book. We offered them all eight of the teams that were on our list. I know a lot of other people, both established names as well as newcomers, offered projects. Most were rejected, including ours."

But then they were able to meet with the publisher and Juaire started pitching out ideas. "I was offering a complete, cohesive universe populated with as many super characters as the publisher thought was necessary. I was trying to give him overnight a universe on par with what DC and Marvel had taken 25 years to create. The final storyline incorporated two series concepts with tie-ins to others."

Campiti goes on. "We have a universe as extensive as Marvel has now—in one title. It's in this massive file cabinet. The publisher of Sirius, Juan Collado, liked what he was hearing and asked them to come up with a name for the group. "We came up with about 40 different names for supergroups. We found out that there aren't really any good names for these team books. We finally came up with Hero Alliance. It sounded like a group, and it didn't sound juvenile."

Team Behind the Team

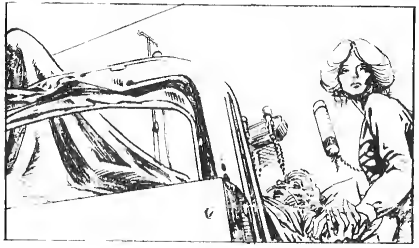
Who are these creators? Chief Hero Alliance creator and Greylore co-writer, Kevin Juaire, came up with the initial idea and many of the characters. He is still the one who comes up with the first draft of most new material, which is then given to Campiti to work on.

Juaire came to writing comics through his love of the medium. Juaire has been around comics all of his life, and just four years ago opened up his own comic book shop, Bargain Books and Collectibles, in Attleboro, MA. He used to kick around ideas with Peter Palmer (the third and final writer on *Greylore*), but didn't consider submitting anything until he met Campiti. He then realized that people just like him submitted and sold material, even though the odds were great against finding any acceptance. "Hey, we can take a little rejection," Juaire says.

But they were instead fortunate. Juaire and Palmer managed to sell a strip, *21st Sentry A.D.* to the DC *New Talent Showcase* book. Then, with Campiti, he managed to sell an eight-page backup story to *Superman*, they also placed a story with Marvel's *Epic Illustrated* (a project with Rick J. Bryant that will not see print in that magazine since *Epic* has recently been cancelled).

Then Sirius opened up for business and approached Campiti and Juaire to start a line of color comics for them. The Hero Alliance is especially dear to Juaire. "This is the project where I really feel that I'm doing what I want to do without interference or some kind of editorial stipulation. It's exactly what I'd want to do if someone said go ahead and

The Guardsman's daughter.



write a comic book. I mean, Dave and I are very adaptable, and love writing established characters, such as Superman, but somebody else has already made up the rules. Here we get to make, and break, our own rules."

The other co-creator, David Campiti is a name that is becoming more familiar to those who bother to check the credit boxes of comics. Campiti has a varied background in writing, having received most of his formal training writing for radio. "The experience was invaluable, especially for my writing of dialogue. I had to learn to say a lot in a little space," reflects Campiti. He has sold stories to Pacific Comics, DC and Marvel. Campiti is one of three writers on *Greylore*.

He also works as packager and editorial advisor for Sirius: either of which job would be bone crushing enough for an ordinary person without Campiti's energy, organization and enthusiasm. He loves the medium so much he has quit his more lucrative advertising and broadcasting career to immerse himself in the creation of good comics material.

They see *The Hero Alliance* as a chance to "have fun creating a good comic book." How do they work on the writing of the series? Does each of them have a favorite character that they write, and does one of them prefer to write action sequences as opposed to quiet scenes?

"We don't switch off," says David, "like Kevin writing character A and me writing character B. That's not how we do things. Kevin is coming up with most of the ideas on Hero Alliance. Take Victor, the main character, he worked out a goodly portion of him in his head before he pitched it to me. I talked out some possible refinements with him. And then we both worked out he origin of the character together. He wrote a rough draft of everything and we discussed it all and then I went in and changed it all. Seriously, by the time we finished working on it together, it turned out pretty nicely."

(At a point early in development of the series, Roger McKenzie was going to be involved. "I made a couple of small suggestions," McKeznie says. "The full credit has to go to David and Kevin." Other commitments have not allowed McKenzie to contribute to the main feature as much as he would like, but he is slated to write back-up features whenever possible. At least one of his characters, American Maid, will definitely appear in *Hero Alliance*.)

The artist on the book is a newcomer by the name of Bart Sears. "We're really lucky to get Bart," chorus Campiti and Juaire. He once attended the Joe Kubert School of Art. He has worked for Marvel, having done some work on the Sectaurs toy insert books and for *Savage Tales*.

A friend of Sears' sent in some sample pages to Campiti. The work was impressive enough that Campiti quickly contacted Sears about penciling *The Hero Alliance*. "He's giving us the best work I've seen out of him yet," Campiti says. The turning point in the book's genesis was when Sears came to visit and talk ove the visual aspects of the book. He even co-created the character of Chic.

"I'm enjoying the book," Sears says. "It's going to be a good book. The story is great. As far as my art, I hope it speaks for itself. David and Kevin like it." His art inspiration, as he has been to so many other pencillers, is Neal Adams. Sears's style is one of painstaking realistic detail, within panels of clear and dynamic storytelling. Campiti sees Sears's art in the Garry Leach/Paul Gulacy vein.

Rounding out the book is veteran inker Rick Bryant. His fine rendering style have enhanced pages at DC, Deluxe, Marvel and Pacific. But Bryant is best known for his portfolio work. His inks complement Sears's style, creating clean, elegant brushwork.

This alliance of creators have given their best to this book of an alliance of heroes. So watch for the book in March, in an extra-length premiere adventure. Then watch for it eight times a year—*The Hero Alliance*. The product of good teamwork. ●

PETER QUINONES previously previewed the new Sun-Runners in Amazing Heroes #82, and is developing a new comic for Sirius Productions.

COMICS IN REVIEW

R.A. JONES on

DAZZLER #42
TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES #5
NIGHTVEIL #2-3
WONDER MAN #1
GREEN LANTERN #194-198
FIRESTAR #1
BATMAN #393
SHADOWSTAR #2
HAWKMAN SPECIAL #1
SECRET WARS II #9

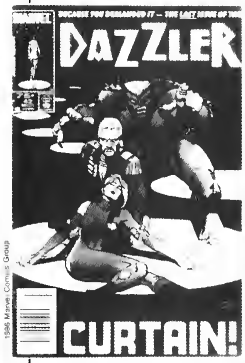
CURTAIN CALL

DAZZLER #42
written by ARCHIE GOODWIN
pencilled by PAUL CHADWICK
inked by ROMEO TANGHAL
colored by PETRA SCOTESE
edited by MICHAEL CARLIN
Marvel Comics
75 cents

In *Amazing Heroes* #37, I made my debut as the magazine's regular comics critic (or reviewer, for those who feel I don't deserve the title "critic"). My string of columns has continued, broken only by a *Preview Special*, longer than that of any other reviewer in the book's history. Cranking out a column every two weeks has helped me develop my skills as a writer and, I hope, along the way provided a modicum of entertainment for the readers.

This is my 50th such column, and in celebration I have been allowed to present an expanded version of my look at the latest comics. I thank Kim Thompson for giving me this opportunity, and for offering the feature to me some years past.

The first comic I reviewed in my initial column was *Dazzler* #30. At the time, I commented that if the book didn't receive a major overhaul it would be in trouble. Time has shown me to have been correct. I think it only fitting that I open this special column by examining the final issue of that same title.



Alison Blaire (Dazzler) is being held captive in an abandoned auditorium located in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Her captor is the woman known as Silence, who intends to use Dazzler's powers to create a new generation of super-powered beings: men and women who would be under Silence's mental control. Dazzler's friends, O.Z. Chase and the Beast, are attempting to rescue her, while a former convict seems intent on killing the heroine.

Dazzler, the character, has always possessed as much potential as any other character. *Dazzler*, the book, has been a loser since the second issue. As a superhero strip, it never generated any real excitement. As a romance comic, its vapid tear-jerking mirrored that seen in such books published 20 years ago. It suffered from unrelenting mediocrity in both story and art.

Things began to change a few issues back; alas, too late to do any good. Paul Chadwick, while still an unrefined talent, brought a more dynamic visual style to the book. He maintains that, through the first few pages of this issue, though he then seems to have lost interest. Through the rest of the story, the layouts grow increasingly simple, at times barely reaching the level of being competent. Likewise, Romeo Tanghal's inks alternated between being richly full and distractingly sparse. Still, Chadwick could develop into a fine artist on whatever future project he undertakes.

The wisest editorial move made on *Dazzler* came when Archie Goodwin was recruited to assume the scripting responsibilities. His presence gave the book an instant credibility it had been long lacking.

While the series did not exactly skyrocket to excellence under his aegis, it did improve immensely; he instilled the strip with a cohesiveness and patina of genuine drama it never before possessed.

It seemed painfully obvious that Goodwin wrapped up the current storyline more quickly than originally intended, yet there were still some nice touches. It was enjoyable to see the action take place in Tulsa, not only because it is far removed from New York and L.A., but also because it is Archie's (and my) hometown. The climax to the adventure also restored to Dazzler a secret identity and laid the groundwork for possible forthcoming appearances.

What I did not like was the blurb plastered across the top of the cover: "Because you demanded it—the *last* issue of the Dazzler!" Marvel is the only company I know that hypes its failures! It may have been meant as self-deprecating humor, but it comes off as being smarmy and tasteless.

Dazzler will certainly not be missed by many people. While I am glad the lead character was not gratuitously slain, the book itself deserved a merciful death. I now hope someone will find a way to make the heroine a more viable character. I truly believe the industry needs successful titles starring female characters. They would give a needed new perspective to male readers and also attract the female audience comics have lost over the years.

This effort was a failure, but it should not discourage future attempts.

TURTLE SOUP

TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES #5
written and illustrated by KEVIN EASTMAN and PETER LAIRD
Mirage Studios
$1.50

The four ninja turtles have found themselves teleported to an alien world. There, they align themselves with a fugitive robot named Honeycutt. He is their only hope of returning to Earth. Unfortunately, he is being pursued by the troops of the evil General Blanque. The turtles and the Fugitoid hope to escape into outer space, but their plans go awry when Honeycutt is abducted by another alien race: the reptilian Triceratons.

The turtles are caught in the crossfire of a battle between the Triceratons and the forces of Gen. Blanque. The ninjas manage to sneak aboard the spaceship in which Honeycutt is being held; mere moments before it blasts off. This presents an even greater danger to the turtles, for the cargo hold in which they are hiding quickly runs out of oxygen. It looks—cough—like the end—cough—for the turtles—cough.

I favorably reviewed the first issue of *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, a parody-cum-tribute to the work of Frank Miller and Jack Kirby. At the time, however, I expressed reservations about seeing the turtles appear on a regular basis. My qualms appeared justified when the second issue appeared on the stands. It was pedestrian and decidedly un-funny, doing nothing more than ape standard super-hero comics. The book was consequently dropped from my buying list.

When issue #5 reached me via the mail service, I thought it only fair to re-examine the book and pass along my evaluation. In all honesty, I detect only the most minute of changes, and none of them for the better.

An effort is made to inject more humor into the script, but it all falls flat. The serious dialogue is equally stiff, seemingly lifted from dozens of Grade Z comics. I also think it is the kiss of death for this particular book to embark on multi-part stories, especially with its quarterly schedule.

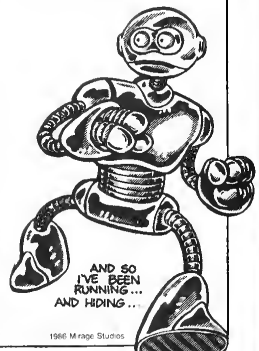
Since the turtles all look alike, it is impossible to tell them apart, save for the fact that each employs a different type of weapon. Characterization and dialogue should be differentiating factors here, but Eastman and Laird only employ two basic personalities: a generic bland one, and a tough, hostile one. Since the hostile dialogue appears to take turns coming from the mouth of each turtle in turn, it loses any value whatsoever. Consequently, we have four characters sharing an identical look and personality.

While I still find the shading used on the book to be interesting and attractive, and artwork itself is only a few notches above that found in many fanzines. Too often the artists appear to fall back on the shading effect to hide the deficiencies in their pencilling.

To all intents and purposes, the ninja turtles were a one-joke play that should have disappeared after the first issue. Its continued success seems to have been sparked by the obscene speculating of investors who see comics as nothing more than pulp kruggerands: a source of quick profits. The prices asked for *TMT #1* are ludicrously high and, unfortunately, all too representative of the financial insanity that makes it difficult for those who want to buy comics for the sheer love of the medium to pick up back issues. Will a new reader want to jump aboard the turtle bandwagon when he knows he'll have to spend a hundred bucks to get the issues he's missed?

None of this is the fault of Eastman and Laird, of course, and one can hardly blame them for milking their success for all it's worth. It won't be long, though, before they come up dry. And, while I don't begrudge them the opportunity to make as much money as possible, neither do I choose to contribute to their coffers.

Those who already read *TMNT* should enjoy it while they can. Those who don't might as well wait for the next faddish phenomenon to come along.



1986 Mirage Studios

RIPPING THE VEIL

NIGHTVEIL #2-3
written by STEVE RINGGENBERG
drawn by MARK HEIKE
inked by BILL ANDERSON and DOUG HAZLEWOOD
colored by REBEKAH BLACK
edited by BILL BLACK
Americomics
$1.75

In the Florida everglades, a ten year old girl named Wendy stands before an eerie mansion. It is the dwelling place of Nightveil, a long-lived mistress of sorcery. The child, drawn by psychic impressions, has come to plead with the sorceress for help.

Members of an evil cult had broken into Wendy's home, killed her parents and abducted her older sister Leslie. The cultists plan to use Leslie as blood sacrifice in a ceremony designed to open a dimensional portal and release the malevolent demon known as N'Shugghoth. Only Nightveil can halt the sacrifice and prevent the demon from ravaging Earth.

Unknown to her, however, there is yet another party involved in the drama. A right-wing, fundamentalist group called the Brotherhood of Purity is out to destroy not only the cult but Nightveil as well, following the biblical decree that "thou shalt not suffer a witch to live."

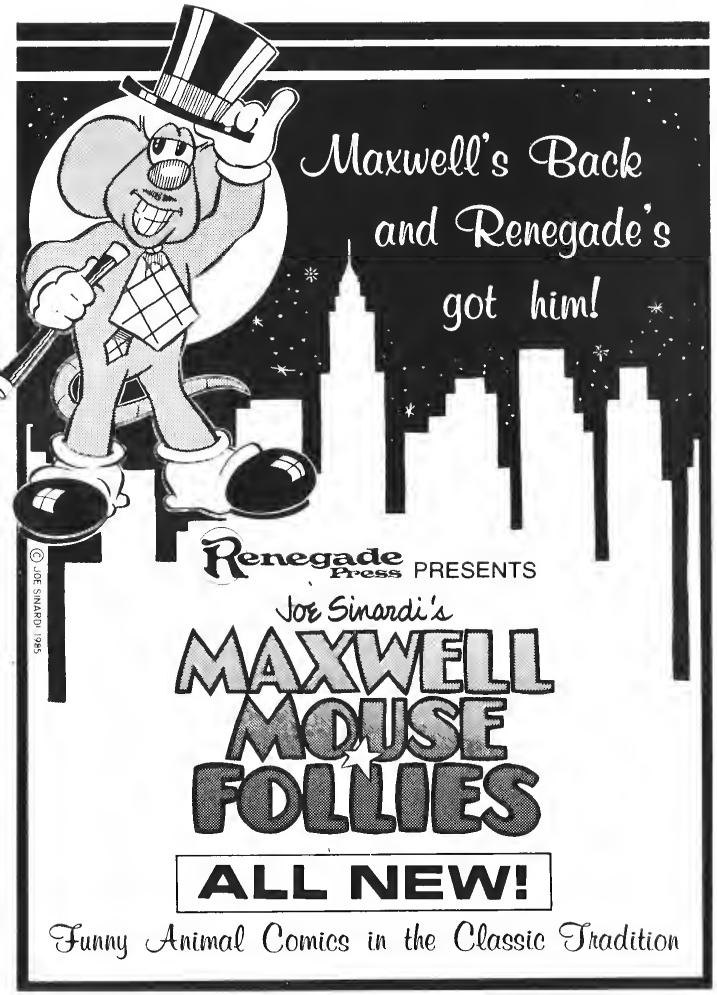
When the Brotherhood interrupts the cult's mystic ritual, spraying bullets with reckless abandon, they inadvertently release N'Shugghoth. The demon snatches Nightveil and carries her back to his netherworld home.

Assuming a perfectly formed human appearance, N'Shugghoth attempts to seduce his captive, planning to father yet more monsters. By using her own formidable powers and tapping into the psychic abilities of Wendy and Leslie, Nightveil is able to shackle the demon and return to Earth.

The danger does not end there for the leader of the Brotherhood is waiting for her, armed with a mystic dagger. In the course of the ensuing battle, the man is drawn into the dark folds of Nightveil's cape, from which he can never escape. Though his death was accidental, Nightveil now thinks of herself as being a murderess. How the burden of this guilt will affect her remains to be seen.

By now, I assume all of you are familiar with Americomics, winners of the "Russ Meyer Award of Excellence" for their depiction of women as little more than a pair of breasts that talk. In all fairness, there is nothing in the story here that I would

© 1986 Americomics



Bi-monthly **On sale February 1986**

characterize as being overly sexist (though it could justifiably be argued that the visual depictions alone are sexist enough). Nor does publisher Bill Black help his cause when, in the letter column, he delivers a casual slap to the women of Memphis by comparing them unfavorably to the "gals" of Daytona Beach who "know all hang out." Don't be so vague next time, Bill—come right out and say you think of women as meat.

As for the story presented in these issues: it was competently written, though I did have some problems with it. The dialogue employed was a major weakness. Any story involving mysticism and the occult should be appropriately moody (see any issue of *Swamp Thing*). Here, all the characters, including Nightveil, talk like those to be found in a Spider-Man story. This certainly doesn't mean that the lady should talk exactly like Dr. Strange or the Spectre, but neither should she come off sounding like Elvira. This flaw could have been offset by evocative narrative, but the captions are equally lacking in power.

Characterization was noticeably sparse. We got into Nightveil's head only on the most superficial levels. The other cast members came across as throwaways and stereotypes. Jim-Bob Irons, leader of the Brotherhood of Purity, is a fanatical Christian. The leader of the cult is a fanatical satanist. Beyond that, they are interchangeable. They have no real personalities and no effort was made to delve into what motivated these men to pursue their relative courses of action.

What may or may not be a jarring lapse in memory occurs on the final page of the story. Leslie is shown rushing with open arms toward a middle-aged couple. Since no mention is made of them being aunt and uncle, neighbors or friends, the clear implication is that they are her parents—who we had been told were killed by the cultists.

Artistically, Mark Heike does a nice job of emulating the "good girl" renderings of decades past. Many panels evoke comparisons to the better examples of 1950s comic book art. As with the script, though, the styule is not entirely appropriate for a mystical story of this sort (just as you would not select, say, John Romita to adapt the works of H.P. Lovecraft).

The art does take a decided turn for the better in issue #3, presumably because of the addition of Doug Hazlewood to the creative team. His inks are more strongly stylized than those of Bill Anderson, adding a modern depth of detail to the pencils without destroying the Golden Age feel. The graphics were hurt by the coloring, which was rather flat and too often overlaid with a sickly orange tone, particularly on characters' skin (though here too there were improvements in issue #3).

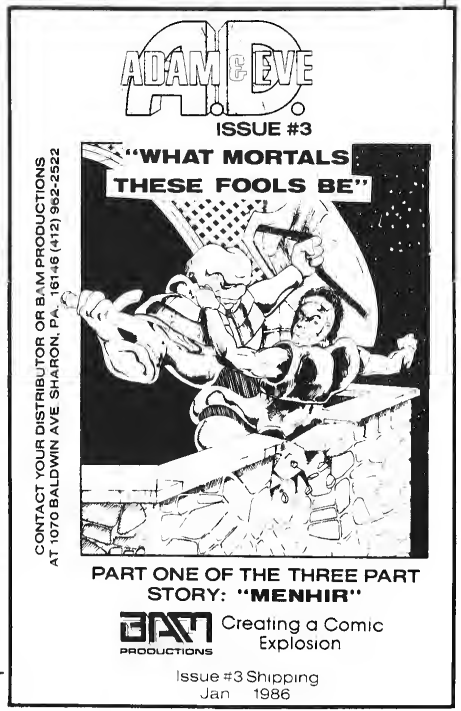
Both issues carried a short backup feature showing the Scarlet Scorpion. The art here was very nondescript, and the story has not progressed enough for me to accurately judge whether there is anything beyond standard superheroics here.

At this point, I still can't bring myself to recommend any of Americomics' books. But in recent months they have begun to make at least token efforts to present genuine stories rather than simply relying on the glandular appeal of their characters to attract readers. They have a long way yet to go, but I hope they make it. If so, I'll be the first to shout hurrah.

In the meantime, if you want both excellent "good girl" art and a top-notch story, I guess you'll just have to patiently await the next offering from Dave (Rocketeer) Stevens.

SIMON SEZ: BAD

WONDER MAN #1
written by DAVID MICHELINIE
pencilled by KERRY GAMMILL
inked by VINCE COLLETTA
colored by CHRISTIE SCHEELE
edited by LYNN COHEN
Marvel Comics
$1.25



COMICS INTERVIEW PUBLICATION

ON SALE NOW

#1 SUPER TEAM OF THE SOUTH!

Southern Knights™

Things are not going well for Simon (Wonder Man) Williams. Fearful of being killed, he has left the ranks of the Avengers. Hoping to pursue a career in acting, he has run into a brick wall. Faced with unemployment, he applies for a job as trouble-shooter for a research facility called Cordco Incorporated (after a late girlfriend of Iron Man?).

While applying for the position, Simon naturally enough finds himself in the midst of a disaster. A scientist employed by Cordco accidentally opens a doorway to another dimension (Gee, there seems to be a lot of that happening nowadays). Through the rift pour scores of Munchkin-esque warriors, mouthing such cute alien phrases as "Kreegah" and "Spa fon." Wonder Man succeeds in sending them back to their own continuum by simply pulling the plug on the machine that opened the dimensional portal.

By virtue of his actions during this crisis, Simon earns a job with Cordco. Unfortunately, the accident-prone scientist doesn't know when to leave well enough alone. He again opens the rift, and this time Cal Oakley—the head of Cordco—is sucked into the alien world.

Wonder Man and his superior, Dulcy Kimble, are about to go in after Oakley when yet another emergency arises. It seems the Sandman has gone berserk inside a nuclear reactor and the Avengers need Simon's services. Forced to choose between saving Oakley or half the population of New York, Wonder Man leaves to aid his fellow Avengers.

Simon succeeds in stopping the Sandman and saving the city, then rushes ack to Cordco. Fortunately, the situation there is also well in hand. It seems Cal Oakley was able to win over the aliens simply by giving them a pocket calculator! However, since it is obvious that Wonder Man will always owe his greater allegiance to the Avengers, he is relieved of his job. Yet he walks away happy, convinced now of his worth as a man and as a hero.

I have just one question concerning this book; why the hell did it ever see print?

The first 23 pages of this adventure were initially intended to serve as issue #1 of a four-part Wonder Man limited series. Even without the explanatory footnote, one can tell it was written more than a year ago. Simon Williams's doubts have been resolved and he has been gainfully employed by the West Coast Avengers for the past ten months or so.

Maybe this will lead to an entire series of retroactive stories (entitled *What Was?*). I can see it now: the story in which Spider-Man contemplates on whether he should ask Gwen Stacy to marry him; the adventure wherein Tony Stark ponders the wisdom of having a heart transplant; the stirring saga of the F.F. celebrating Franklin's first birthday.

If the powers that be didn't think this series was fit to see print when it was originally written, then why foist it on us now? Couldn't *Marvel Fanfare* handle it?

Even with its hopeless anachronisms, I wouldn't have objected too strongly if we had at least been given a good story. Since, as I said, nearly 60 per cent of this special is devoted to the first issue of the limited series, much of it is intended to do nothing more than re-cap Wonder Man's origin and set the stage for the remainder of the series. The battle with the aliens is silly and unpretentious fluff.

The remaining 17 pages seem to have been merely tacked on to resolve Simon's personal conflict and get him fired by Cordco. In other words, a complete waste of paper and ink.

Will someone drop me a line and tell me what's happened to David Michelinie? At one point he was near the top of Marvel's creative echelon. He was doing a fine job with the Avengers, and scripted the best *Iron Man* stories in years. Then he simply disappeared. (The victim of creative burnout? Corporate politics? What?) He has now re-surfaced, of course, but on such projects as *Revenge of the Living Monolith* and *Thundercats*. He shows some promise of recapturing the old spark with *The Bozz Chronicles*, but it's obvious on *Wonder Man* he was simply going through the motions.

© 1986 DC Comics Inc.

The one area of the book that isn't a major disappointment is in the art department. I've sung Kerry Gammill's praises before, and intend to do so again. Heavily influenced by the work of John Buscema, Kerry's art has even more detail and is ideally suited for the super-hero genre.

There is, however, one facility Buscema possesses that Gammill has yet to master—speed. Where Buscema seems capable to cranking out 100 pages oer month, Kerry has a hard time getting a single book finished on time. If he can only pick up the tempo to the point where he can handle a regular title, there's no reason why Kerry, with his forceful and dynamic style, couldn't win a large and loyal fan following.

As usual, though, Marvel here saddles him with an inappropriate embellisher. It's like someone sitting in their offices says, "Kerry Gammill's pencilling? Great. This'll be a good time to try out that blind inker we hired last week." It's not quite that bad here, and indeed Vince Colletta has done one of his better jobs of recent memory, but more effort should be made to find a compatible inker for Gammill.

I don't think there's any way Marvel can lose money on *Wonder Man*, but neither will they gain any respect or credibility from it. It's a loser that should be ignored by all but the most fanatic of continuity freaks.

FLASHING LIGHT

GREEN LANTERN #194-198
written by STEVE ENGLEHART
pencilled by JOE STATON
inked by BRUCE PATTERSON
colored by ANTHONY TOLLIN
edited by ANDY HELFER
DC Comics
75 cents

While the primary focus of this review will be *Green Lantern* #198, the four issues preceding it laid the ground work for this ultimate Crisis on Infinite Earths crossover, and should also be briefly examined.

Issue #194 was arguably the best in this sequence, in terms of presenting the greatest number of effective scenes. The first of these involves a rather amusing moment when Hal Jordan, stripped of his Green Lantern persona and betrayed by the woman he loves, momentarily comtemplates drowning hiw sorrow at a local bar—only to decide that such a response was not his style. This works especially well when one considers the

© 1986 DC Comics Inc.

parallels drawn between his situation and that of Tony Stark (who was also replaced in his costumed identity by a black man).

This immediately segues into another nice scene in which Hal is reconciled with his old friend Tom Kalmaku. Hal then makes a pilgrimage to the grave of Abin Sur, the alien Green Lantern who, in his dying act, passed his power ring onto Hal Jordan. Someone else was already at the gravesite, however: Guy Gardner, a man who for one brief moment had been a Green Lantern himself. The mentally disturbed Gardner will do anything to regain that status and a dissident band of Guardians—seeking to avert the coming Crisis—grants him his wish.

Issue #195 was obviously meant to aid those who had come in late. It recounted the various origins of Hal Jordan, Guy Gardner, and John Stewart (the newest of Earth's Green Lanterns). In addition, it presented Gardner with his coveted power ring and a glitzy new wave costume.

Aside from a Howard Chaykin cover, there was little to distinguish issue #196. The sole high point came when Hal Jordan reveals to Stewart that he had been this planet's original GL.

In issue #197 we saw that even more members of the Green Lantern Corps were being killed as a result of the Crisis. Acting on the directions of the Guardians who restored his power, Guy Gardner is recruiting a team of supervillains to aid him on a mission inside the anti-matter universe where he intends to destroy the spot on an alien moon where the Anti-Monitor came to life. The leader of the dissident Guardians also gives Hal Jordan a power ring (though denying him the right to wear a uniform), and Hal agrees to help Gardner and his band.

These brewing plots come to a boil in the double-sized 198th issue. John Stewart and other members of the GL Corps learn that if Hal and Guy succeed in their mission it will have the opposite effect of what they intended—serving to strengthen the Anti-Monitor rather than destroy him.

By this point, Guy Gardner has lost all reason; going so far as to attempt to murder Hal Jordan. Fortunately, Jordan and the other heroes are able to hold Gardner and cohorts at bay long enough for the danger to pass, as the Anti-Monitor perishes at the dawn of time.

A heavy price is paid for this victory. Tomar-Re, one of the leaders of the GL Corps, is mortally wounded. With his dying breath, he welcomes Hal Jordan back into the fold, and the issue ends with the Earthling, once again clad in his green and grey costume. The circle has been completed.

Green Lantern has perhaps been more closely, and more effectively, tied to the events in Crisis than has any other title in the DC line. Indeed, events chronicled in an early issue of this book served as the foundation for the menace in Crisis. By the same token, the aftereffects of the Crisis will be very deeply felt here in the next few months.

The crossovers between the two titles have generally been quite natural and worked well, but I found myself mildly disappointed in the climax. The debate over what course of action should he take in and why, seems to drag on forever, with none of the reasoning being particularly sound. The opening half of the book could have been pared to the bone and left more tightly and sharply paced. This would also have left more room to build greater suspense into the struggle to stop Guy Gardner from making the mistake that will doom the universe.

Visual aid to the story is practically non-existent. Joe Staton is so heavily bogged down in the cartoon representations he seems to prefer that the characters are reduced to mere caricatures. The emotional impact of Tomar-Re's death is greatly diluted by the fact that the art conveys no depth of feeling at all. As a consequence, the denouement does not move the reader nearly so much as it should have.

Still, even with all the flaws, scripter Steve Englehart has made this book much better than it's been for many long months. It represents the finest work he is doing at the moment. While I think he can do even better, he should be commended for making the strip enjoyable once again.

I'm not sure how well future developments planned for the book will work. Since I no longer look upon reading *Green Lantern* as being a chore, however, I await the changes with some anticipation. New directions are about to be explored, and superhero fans might be well advised to plug into them from the beginning.

Things have been dark for a long time, but there is some indication that the light will soon come back in full force.

PAWN TO QUEEN

FIRESTAR #1
written by TOM DeFALCO
pencilled by MARY WILSHIRE
inked by STEVE LEIALOHA
colored by D. GRAZIUNAS
edited by ANN NOCENTI
Marvel Comics
75 cents

For 13-year-old Angelica Jones, love comes in the form of a scruffy cat and a doting grandmother who can make her feel like the most special girl in the world.

Reality intrudes when she steps off the bus for the first day of classes at her new school. Ostracized by her fellow females, she must also cope with the realization that she is beginning to exhibit a strange power.

Snubbed by her classmates, ignored by her father, Angelica is then pushed over the brink when her beloved grandmother dies. Alone, confused, frightened by her awakening mutant abilities, the girl is in desperate need of guidance. Professor Charles Xavier, founder of the X-Men and New Mutants, hopes to give that to her. Unfortunately, he arrives on the scene too late. Emma Frost, the evil White Queen, has reached the Jones's first, and convinced them that Angelica should be placed in her charge. As Xavier himself declares, "May God protect her."

Such is the current state of affairs at Marvel that almost anything involving mutants can be written off as being sub-par, and *Firestar* #1 is no exception.

What is truly sad, though, is the fact that there was no need for it to be so, the ingredients were there to make this a warm and affecting story of adolescence. Instead, the easy road was taken.

© 1986 Marvel Comics Group

Rather than attempting to craft a tale that would appeal to all ages, scripter Tom DeFalco seems content to play to those who love anything having to do with the X-Men and to the fans of the Saturday morning cartoon show that originally gave birth to Firestar.

The loving relationship between Angelica and her "Nana" should have been the key to making this series work, rather than a mere plot device. The strength of human love could have been explored with quiet fervor; instead, we get the melodrama of a heart attack. Obviously, it was "necessary" to kill the grandmother in order to leave Angelica susceptible to the advances of the White Queen, but that moment could have been delayed.

© 1986 Marvel Comics Group

Denied the depiction of true human interplay, we are forced to settle for stereotypes and cliches. There are the three snobbish girls who make the life hellish for Angelica. They appear to be the only other girls in the school—after all, if Angelica ever made friends with any of the hundreds of other young ladies who were bound to be there, the three Snub Sisters would have no use at all. Angelica's boyfriend, a football player, isn't treated like a typical jock, but he serves no function save as an object on which one of the girls can justify her hatred for Angelica.

The story also spotlights a form of sexism that is common in comics yet which I have never seen mentioned. While women justly receive a lot of attention for their portrayal in the medium, has anyone stopped to think how poorly single male parents are presented? Almost without exception, they are callous, self-centered, authoritarian and totally insensitive to the needs of their children.

Talk about painting an entire segment of the population with a single broad bush! Believe it or not, there are a few men out there who make damn good fathers; men who care and do their best to help their kids. You wouldn't know that from reading comics, and Angelica's father here exhibits nearly all of the negative traits listed above.

Visually, this book barely matches the level of artistry found in the cartoon show. Mary Wilshire has always seemed inconsistent to me: turning in a good job one time and dreck the next. Here we get dreck. The art is simple and lacking in detail; more

suitable for a Star Comic.

Even Steve Leialohas usually strong inking style seems muted here. In one way, I guess you could say Wilshire's pencils do deliver what the script calls for—they are not people, but merely visual representations of the various stereotypes. (One minor but annoying point is the fact that Angelica's main rival looks like she's 40 years old.)

It is really not a major outrage if this four issue limited series is intended to appeal only to the younger readers. And if it manages to entice a few TV fans and female readers into the comics fold it will certainly be a worthwhile effort.

But when I think of what it could have been—a delight for readers of all ages—I can't suppress a figurative sigh. Marvel should have had higher aspirations.

1985 DC Comics, Inc.

DARK HORSE WINNER

BATMAN #393
written by DOUG MOENCH
drawn by PAUL GULACY
colored by ADRIENNE ROY
edited by LEN WEIN
DC Comics
75 cents

The American C.I.A., in an unprecedented move, asks the Batman for his assistance in a matter of national security. The mission takes the darknight Detective to the city of Venice on the trail of a terrorist known as the Dark Rider. From there the hero travels to Bonn, West Germany, where he meets a lovely Soviet agent called Katia. She is later instrumental in springing him from a lethal crossfire on the streets of Moscow.

They learn that the Dark Rider has hidden a thermonuclear device in the belly of an antique statue. He intends to detonate the device in an American city, and by so doing lead others to follow suit and bring the citadel of democracy to its knees. Both Katia and Batman seek to stop him, for fear he will trigger World War III.

The preliminary attraction that will lead one to pick up this particular issue of *Batman* is the art. Paul Gulacy has never before illustrated a Batman story, but I had high expectations regarding the kind of job he would produce.

I was not disappointed. His Batman is not so grimly frightening as that of Neal Adams, nor so flowingly ethereal as that of Marshall Rogers, but is is more realistic (in the exaggerated sense that any comic art can bear that label). There is a real man inside the costume, the cloak drapes like actual cloth. It is a Batman of fierce determination and superb athletic ability.

In a strange way this is bad, for Gulacy's outstanding rendition of the character puts to shame those we have seen in the past year, and to which we know we will have to return two months hence. Gulacy's use of light and dark is ideally suited for the Batman and his milieu, creating a world that is like the one we know, though more vibrant and alive, even in its malevolence.

In my recent review of *Six From Sirius II*, I commented on how well Gulacy works with his frequent collaborator, Doug Moench. The combination works equally well here. Moench has delivered one of his better Batman scripts. It has a tightness and economy that should be the norm for this title.

While tales of international intrigue should not be employed every issue, it is an element in which Batman fits quite comfortably. Furthermore, it is a genre Moench handles well. The story here is exciting and fast moving, a fine action suspense yarn. Moench has also created a worthy addition to the Batman pantheon in the form of the Soviet agent Katia.

Ultimately, though, the greatest excitement is that generated by Gulacy's stunning artwork. Paul has not devoted himself to an ongoing series since he left *Master of Kung Fu* several years ago, but it would be a fan's dream come true to see him portray the Batman on a regular basis (perhaps in *Detective*, which would require a lower output of pages each month). If this could be pulled off, and the rumored return of Marshall Rogers comes to pass, Batman could become the most visually enthralling character of 1986.

In the meantime, I would suggest that you pick up *Batman* #393 (and its concluding chapter in issue #394) and see what the Darknight Detective can be when the right creative force breathes life into him.

1985 DC Comics, Inc.

LOST IN SHADOWS

SHADOWSTAR #2
written by LARRY SHAPIRO
drawn by ED SAVAGE
inked by AKIN and GARVEY
ShadowStar Press
$1.50

Daniel Troy, while on a mission for the planet Astar, encountered a mysterious woman known as ShadowStar, who bestowed upon him the power to manipulate energy. Upon returning to his homeworld, Troy finds himself placed under arrest and charged with treason.

Using his newly acquired powers to fight his way free, Troy seeks refuge on the planet Shirish. There he meets a furry little fellow named Rez and a fugitive rebel who calls herself Foxfur. While this is happening, the ruling council of Astar is planning Troy's death. On another planet, the villainous Abyss is plotting to control the galaxy. And ShadowStar, the lead character in the book, is nowhere to be seen.

Those who read *Shadowstar* #1 know that it was a pretty lame effort. The second issue represents a big improvement, but it is still mired in mediocrity. The artwork in the first issue was terribly amateurish, but it was the area that showed the most improvement here.

The initial impression would be that Akin and Garvey are responsible for the strides made, and their typically gorgeous inking does indeed enhance the visuals greatly. But, having seen the pencils for this issue, I can say that Ed Savage has done a much better job as well.

His figures are not nearly so stiff, and he makes greater use of detail and shading. He still leaves far too many panels devoid of any background, and his sense of proportion and perspective sometimes goes awry. His biggest fault is that he has simply not yet mastered the art of storytelling.

He professes to admire the work of Mike Grell, so I would suggest he study several issues of *Jon Sable*, paying close attention to the sequences in which Grell advances the story for pages at a time without the use of a single word. For that matter, he might try watching an old Hitchcock film with the sound turned off.

Savage has taken a long stride forward in his art in a relatively short time, but the graphics here are still not up to high professional standards.

In like manner, the scripting is much smoother than in the first manner (wherein problems were caused by some missed signals between the writer and the artist). Again, though, more development is needed. Too often, the story seems to jump from scene to scene, and the reader is not given enough information. Scripter Larry Shapiro needs to learn when it is all right to let the art alone carry the story and when it is necessary to supplement it with narrative.

Thus, it is the actual scripting that is at fault here, rather than the plot of the story (which is certainly no worse than that found in many other comics, and even shows some daring by totally ignoring the book's star in only the second issue). Shapiro appears to bring to his writing only what he has gathered from reading comic books, a common problem nowadays. Second generation pastiches of old Roy Thomas dialogue simply aren't enough. More can be learned by merely spending a day listening to real people speak to each other.

I am delighted by the fact that there are so many different books available to comics fans today. But while this offers many more opportunities for creators, it also increases the need to be distinct, original and professional in every regard. On *ShadowStar*, both Savage and Shapiro have exhibited a willingness to learn and a desire to improve, for which they should be commended. It is to be hoped that in time a first-rate comic will grow from this.

ShadowStar has a long road yet to travel. And while I plan to follow its progress, it has not yet reached the point where I can recommend it.

1985 DC Comics, Inc.

SIAMESE BIRDS

HAWKMAN SPECIAL #1
written by TONY ISABELLA
pencilled by RICHARD HOWELL
inked by RON RANDALL
colored by MICHELE WOLFMAN
edited by ALAN GOLD
DC Comics
$1.25

Katar Hol, Hawkman, is plagued by an overwhelming guilt. To save the Earth, he pushed the button that killed eight of his fellow Thanagarians. The action he took was unavoidable; his cause just. But Hawkman is a superhero in the traditional mold, and the taking of any life is anathema to him.

The spirits of the dead Thanagari-

ans are unable to pass on to whatever awaits them in the netherworld. Only Hawkman can release them to continue their journey. To do this, he must place himself in a trance and enter the astral plane in which they still reside. Even as he does so, however, another enemy threatens to strike him down. His only hope for rescue comes from his wife Shiera and a most unlikely ally—his old foe the Gentleman Ghost. Even when they triumph, the spectre of the Shadow War still hangs over them.

My view of the *Hawkman Special*, as you will see, is like a double-edged blade that cuts each way. My opinion is both positive and negative. The reason for that is quite simple. The special is a single unit, but in a very real sense there are two separate stories here—vastly different from each other, yet irrevocably joined at the hip.

The first half of the book is terrific. It sets up the conflict well and draws us into the situation. Its greatest strength (as was true of the recent *Hawkman* mini-series) comes from its focus on the relationship between the two lead characters.

This is the one area in which scripter Tony Isabella has bettered Hawk writers of the past. Under his guidance, Hawkwoman is no longer merely a shapely extension of her husband's personality. She is an individual in her own right—a loving soulmate to Hawkman and the anchor of his existence. The bond they share is presented in a warm and adult manner that is a joy to behold.

Then comes the second half of the book, and the glow dissipates. Hawkman's encounter with the spirit world is handled rather brusquely and clumsily, as if Isabella is not truly comfortable in dealing with matters of mysticism. A complex dilemma is given some rather simplistic solutions. It was as if Tony set up a situation, discovered he couldn't handle it properly, and terminated it as quickly and easily as possible.

That still left him with eight pages to fill. So we get a dull, hackneyed comic book battle with rock creatures that look like they stepped from a 1960s issue of *Journey into Mystery*. The human emotions and drama that were so lovingly nurtured in the beginning of the book are brutally aborted, leaving you sorely disappointed.

The art has a similar schizophrenic quality to it. While I have never particularly enjoyed Richard Howell's work, I was favorably impressed by what I saw in the first 18 pages of this story. He did an especially good job on the scenes of the Hawks in flight,

imbuing them with a fluid grace that truly evoked sensations of weightlessness.

From the mid-point onward, his pencils began to deteriorate: exemplified by the thick, stiff figures that mar so much of his art. Backgrounds and details were practically abandoned. Imaginative layout gave way to square orthodoxy.

The one constant was Ron Randall's inking. Throughout the book he provides strong support for Howell's pencils. He does not overwhelm them the way Alfredo Alcala did in the mini-series, but he does soften the harsh edges and enhance the texture.

I'm going to go ahead and mildly recommend the book as a useful bridging tool until the Hawks get into their own series, but I'm not enthusiastic about it. It broke from the starting gate like a thoroughbred stallion at full gallop—but it stumbled across the finish line like a broken-down nag on its last legs.

FREE AT LAST

SECRET WARS II #9
written by JIM SHOOTER
pencilled by AL MILGROM
inked by STEVE LEIALOHA
edited by BOB BUDIANSKY
Marvel Comics
$1.25

"A lot of fanzine writers read *Secret Wars I* and assumed that it was just a war. Most of the meat of it went over their heads. The readers got it—they understood the point of the series, but the reviewers, who are allegedly more sophisticated, didn't.

the comic was enormously successful, and I think that's why the reviewers were so critical of it."
—Jim Shooter, speaking in *Comics Buyer's Guide*

Come on, Jimbo—whose chain are you trying to jerk here? I had planned to ignore *Secret Wars II* in my column (aside from a few brief snide comments) and simply leave it to the readers to make the ultimate judgment by buying the thing or leaving it on the stands. But when I came upon such dissembling as that quoted above, some response is in order.

Shooter claims that the first series was written with "more philosophy and though, and subtlety—all of which escaped us poor ignorant reviewers. Not at all. We all knew what it was about, even if Jim denied

it (possibly even to himself). The philosophy behind it was that of all business ventures: to make money hand over fist. The thought was equally clear: to create a toy tie-in that would also entice readers to sample other Marvel titles. The subtlety was there only for those to whom a tornado in the living room is their first hint of inclement weather.

The reason for *Secret Wars II* is even plainer: success breeds success. Shooter claims that he had the stories for both series in his head when he began. I have no doubt that this is true, since large portions of it were lifted practically verbatim from a story he had already done years ago in *Avengers*.

The reason for *Secret Wars II* is even plainer: success breeds success. Shooter claims that he had the stories for both series in his head when he began. I have no doubt that this is true, since large portions of it were lifted practically verbatim from a story he had already done years ago in *Avengers*.

That story has come to be known as the "Michael Saga." It too involved a nigh-omnipotent being with the power over life and death, whose own ultimate demise is caused by a lack of understanding on the part of the heroes. The main differences between this story and *Secret Wars* is that it did not require 21 issues to tell—and it was well written.

Find that story if you can, read it and compare it to *Secret Wars*. If you do so, I think you'll agree that the critical pounding the latter has received does not reflect an insidious hatred of either Marvel or Jim Shooter—but a mere statement of fact that the manis now cranking out inferior material.

Denial in the face of criticism is not uncommon, but Shooter does no one a service by attempting to lay all the negative reaction to *Secret Wars* on the doorstep of a few fan critics. I have heard tales from more than one source of his despondency over negative, occasionally vile, letters received from readers (letters that never saw the light of day in *Marvel Age*).

Now can he distract anyone by his constant references to the series' impressive sales figures. That isn't the point, and Jim knows it. Popularity and quality have never been synonymous. He should simply take his lumps and face up to the truth.

And the truth, as most people not seated behind his desk would perceive it, is that: from beginning to end, this series was poorly conceived and poorly executed. The dialogue throughout has been sophomoric, and no effort at all was made to keep the heroes in character. What little substance there was to these two series could have been covered in a single four-issue limited series—which would also have given both writer and artists the time to do more than hack work.

And what does Shooter pass of as philosophy here? It can best be summarized in the words spoken by the beyonder in this (hopefully) last issue: "The driving force of all existence is ... desire!"

I like heavy to the max. Since under its many definitions, desire could be used to describe every impulse, motive, and instinct of both humans and animals, that statement makes about as much sense as spending nine issue to tell us that the purpose of existence is to exist: "I am, therefore I am."

There is no point in bothering to attack the incredibly pedestrian artwork. At this juncture, the would be like kicking a dead dog.

I have commented several times on the importance I think *Crisis on Infinite Earths* will have for DC Comics as a whole. Well, I believe *Secret Wars* may possess equal significance for Marvel. It has created a negative backlash unlike any I have ever experienced in 20 years as a collector. It pains me more than you can know to say this, but Marvel stands on the brink of complete creative bankruptcy.

The end of the Beyonder, and of one of worst series in the history of Marvel.

The shock waves from *Secret Wars* may push it into the chasm.

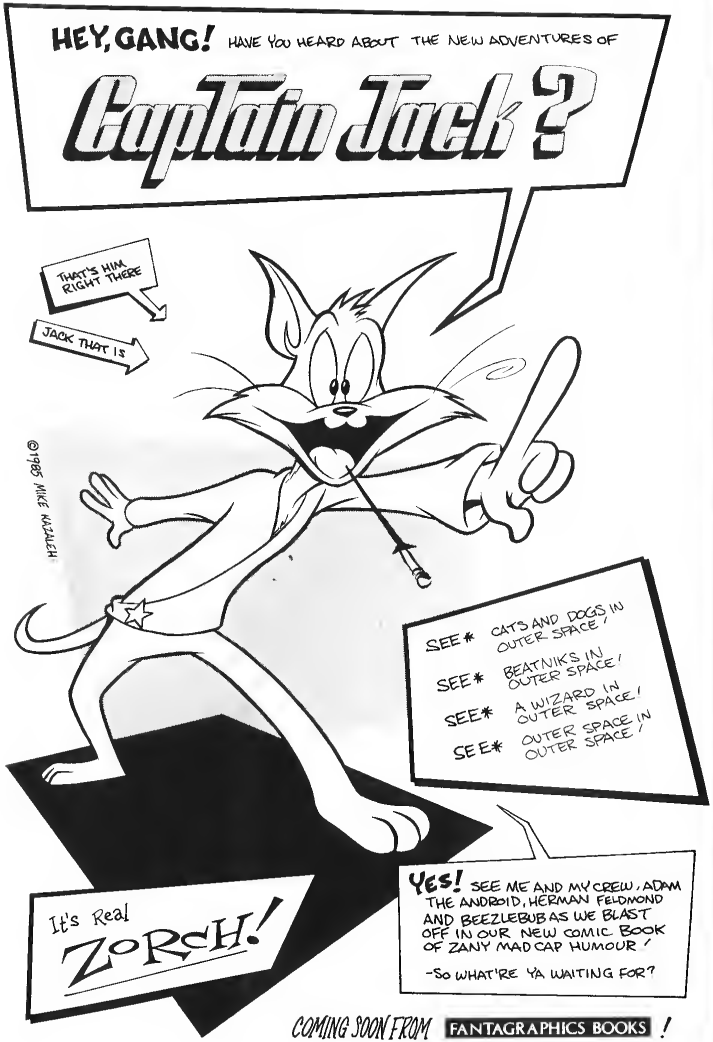
SLICE AND DICE

Message to First Comics: Regarding *Jon Sable*, I'm not sure how long you can expect your readers to shell out $1.75 for a book that looks like it was drawn in ten minutes and takes only half that time to read because it has half a dozen full-page panels, three double-page spreads, and a story with about 20 words, whose high spot comes when we see Sable watching a squirrel frolic!

Laugh of the month: Scope the ad for Rich Buckler's new book, *How to Become a Comic Book Artist* which promises to teach you how to "tell an exciting, dramatic action packed story—*in your own style* (emphasis mine). This is great advice, coming from an artist who's made a career out of using every art style except his own.

And now, I've certainly held the stage long enough. As I said, the past 50 issues have been most interesting and educational for me. I don't know if I'll be around for the next 50, but I've had a blast getting this far. Thanks for letting me share it with you.

Stay Amazing. ●



AMAZING READERS

KIM KANITZ
Pierce, NE

Decline of Letters

I used to enjoy reading letter columns in the "good old days."

Now I often refuse to even look at the letters but restrict myself to reading the editorial replies, looking for tidbits of news not printed elsewhere.

Why is this? In the past, comic books and fan publications about them had letters that were interesting and fun to read; speculations on the heroes, how their powers worked, what philosophy the story was trying to propound—a pleasant exchange of knowledge, speculation, and opinions between fans and editors. Of late, however, letters tend to run toward two extremes: mindless adulation or bitter criticism. Mindless praise I can understand—it's natural to go on about something you enjoy (while boring your friends to death with it). But why the criticisms? My thinking goes like this:

If a comic does not entertain you, it has failed its purpose. If it fails mildly and there still is hope, one writes to the creators to explain how it could be improved to insure your continued support. If it is a total flop, one simply does not waste further money on it. Enough people do this, it dies. Stan Lee acknowledged this "Editorship of the Masses" decades ago. But what is the purpose of writing to a *different* publication to persuade others to feel as you do—to lead them to boycott the product?

But why? Each person is perfectly capable of deciding whether or not a given comic "works" for him or her, and there are certainly plenty of critics in print to act as consumer advocates, if such are truly needed. I think it all boils down to the fact that we humans love to criticize, nit-pick, tear down; what we often fail to do (and I'm as guilty of this as anyone) is realize that our opinions may very well end up diminishing someone else's enjoyment of a given comic. I may think that *Squadron Supreme* is a tremendous series, but after reading many people criticize its background as a JLA-rip-off and how it is unethical to support such a book, I may eventually re-read those issues with less enthusiasm—in effect, all those opinions would have "spoiled it" for me (I'm pleased to say, however, that so far they haven't!).

Illustration by KEN HOOPER; character © Conan Properties

Please don't mis-understand me—I'm a firm supporter of free expression—but I *am* asking everyone who reads this letter to remember one thing: words are the most powerful tool Man has at his disposal. As responsible people, we all need to be thinking abot what impact what we say has on others.

Comics are made to turn a profit, it is true—but the method to that profit is entertainment. I'm not in the profit end of things. And I want my entertainment to remain just that—entertainment.

★ *You raise some good points, Ken. I think one reason people write to us to complain about Marvel—which is what some of our columns are full of at times—is that they feel frustrated with much of the company's product, feel that if they wrote Marvel their letters wouldn't get printed, and feel that the creators are content to stay in neutral as they glide toward the next deadline. Witness the next letter.*

But the brand name Marvel has always stood for something besides mere commerce. Perhaps the readers are simply becoming older, more discriminating, harder to please with stories they feel they've already read before (usually they have) but with the icons changed.

I too want my entertainment to remain just entertainment. But, you see, I want my brain to be engaged in my entertainment. If I want to turn off my mind, I watch Dynasty. I expect something more from Marvel than the four-color equivalent of Joan Collins. —ABC

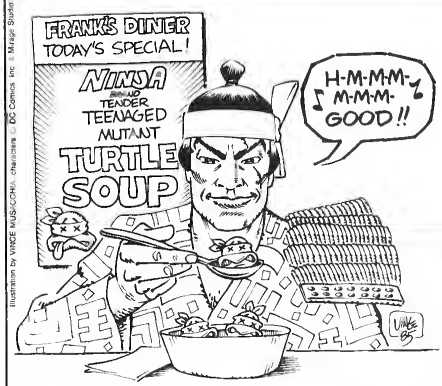


Illustration by VINCE MUSACCHIO, characters © DC Comics Inc. / Mirage Studios

BRIAN K. HENRY
Springfield, MO

Increasing Awareness

Just a note to thank you for the consistently high quality of your publication. I too was one of those unfortunate souls mired in the much of Marvel miasma until I discovered your mag and found out that now all independent comics are about gun-toting, ominously named, Commie-hating, freelance mercenaries and the entire DC line is not merely an excuse for three dozen Batman and Superman crossovers each month. Of course, I still collect Marvels, but an ever-dwindling number.

From my point of view, then, I'd say that increasing awareness among fans of the existence of your mag would be the key to a broader audience for the independent comics. May I suggest that you get hold of Marvel's and DC's subscriber's listings and send a free sample copy of your magazine to a random sampling of the names listed. (Cross checking the list against your own subscriber list, of course). The circulation of *Amazing Heroes* and, therefore, most independent comics would skyrocket.

I have only one real complaint about *Amazing Heroes* and that is it's difficult to justify buying an issue if you're not really concerned about the subject in the feature article, because the feature takes up so much of the mag! On the other hand, I wouldn't want to see you decrease the length of the cover article, or go monthly with a bigger mag, so...

Finally, I just want to get in my votes against the Flexographic process and *Secret Wars* (I, II, cross-overs and "Secret Wars: The Hype Campaign"). Personally, I think Marvel should appoint John Byrne the new editor-in-chief and say that they only published the whole "Secret" mess because Jim Shooter was holding the entire bullpen hostage at gunpoint. John Byrne's first act would be to write the new 2-issue limited series, "Public Retractions," in which it turns out the entire Beyonder fiasco was a hoax, engineered by Nightmare.

Bring back the top 100!! How else are we outsiders supposed to know how the independents are faring against the Big Two?

ARTHUR GERMYN
Lowell, MA

The Betrayal of the JLA

Regarding the current controversy over Marvel's *Secret Wars* books, I'd like to throw in my two cents worth by saying something that occurred to me not too long ago. Has anyone out there noticed that the plots of both *Secret Wars I* and *II* have been stolen from Roy Thomas and Jim Shooter himself? In issues 70 and 71 of *The Avengers*, Roy Thomas developed a story line that followed a character whose powers and personality matched the Beyonder's perfectly: the Grandmaster (since relegated to "Elders of the Universe" status in recent Marvel Universes). The story had the Grandmaster, a god-like being from another universe, decide to have a match of cosmic chess with Kang the Conqueror that involved pitting the Avengers against a group of DC inspired ringers on an alternate planet, in this case, another Earth. The prize: winners get to keep their home planets intact, the losers' to be destroyed.

Sound familiar? It's the plot of *Secret Wars I* gang. Except in the latter, more heroes and villains were used.

The other plot I mentioned occurred also in *The Avengers*, whose exact numbers I forget, but whose plot stretched out to about twelve issues that involved nearly every single Avenger against a menace known only as Michael. This Jim Shooter written story followed the Avengers as they battled Michael, a Beyonder type god who destroys the Avengers by tale's end, and then brings them back to life!

Sound familiar? It's the plot to *Secret Wars II*, gang—this time an even closer copy. Since Shooter was stealing from himself, I guess he thought no one would mind. But the similarities here are so numerous that I'm not going to mention them all. Anyway, just a bit of food for though for your readers. It's kind of a pity that most readers of the *Secret Wars* will think they're paying 75 cents a copy

Illustration by CARL TAYLOR and SAM DELAROSA, character © Marvel Comics Group

ATTENTION RETAILERS!

BYRNE RETURNS

1975 Charlton Publications

Before Fantastic Four... before The X-Men... before even Iron Fist... the amazing talent of John Byrne was on display in Doomsday + 1, an exciting tale of post-holocaust adventurers.

Now Fantagraphics Books is reprinting, in a monthly, full-color, Deluxe format, the entire Doomsday saga—including the little-seen seventh issue (presented here in color for the first time!).

Each issue of John Byrne Classics features a complete Doomsday + 1 tale, newly colored by Mark Wheatley and Kathryn Mayer; a brand new cover by Byrne, done especially for this edition; and a bonus short feature spotlighting one of the Fantagraphics Books series: Dalgoda, Lloyd Llewellyn, Critters, Journey, etc.

What could make this package hotter? Neal Adams, you say? All right, then—the first issue features a Doomsday back cover by Neal Adams, newly rendered in full color by Adams himself!

The first issue of John Byrne Classics ships in April 1986. Byrne. Adams. Monthly. Deluxe format. Fantagraphics Books. You have been warned.

JOHN BYRNE CLASSICS #1

coming in April from FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS

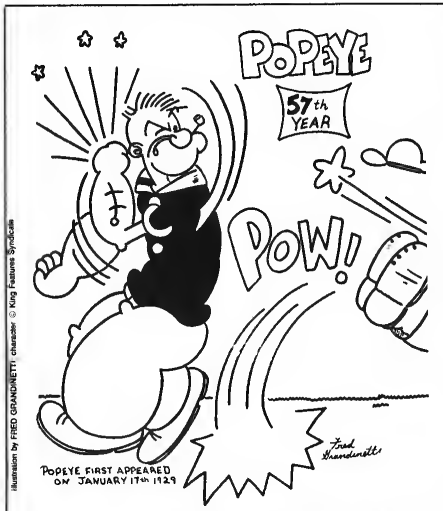


Illustration by FRED GRANDINETTI, character © King Features Syndicate

for new and original material when all they're getting, if only they read comics back farther than X-Men #94, is warmed over plots from ten and twenty years ago!

★ *Cosmic plots were once, believe it or not: an innovation in comics, and they were used more sparingly than today. They can still be effective, though, but in the case of* Secret Wars II, *it was all just a shaggy dog story.*

By the way, Shooter's writing in those issues of The Avengers *shows definite ability. Somebody should work with the guy someday, instead of for him.* —ABC

DALE COE
Warrington, Cheshire, England

Greetings from the U.K.

AH #77 was another great issue, one which I thoroughly enjoyed. I would like to comment on one or two things which particularly caught my eye.

Firstly, your intriguing theory as to the manner in which Barry Allen might be rescued from his fate in *Crisis #8*. I'm afraid it will have to remain exactly that, an intriguing theory. I doubt very much if DC would be prepared to open themselves to the scorn of all fandom by reneging on their promise that all changes brought about in the maxi-series are permanent and unchangeable, do you? Don't get me wrong, I would be the first to welcome Barry Allen back to the land of the living if it could be done without ruining the good work of recent months, but as it is, I would prefer him to remain dead. Like you, I owe my love of comics to Barry (Flash) Allen. I have painstakingly built up an almost complete collection of *Flash* and nary a week goes by without my nose being buried in the Broome/Fox/Infantino classics of the '60s. I've just had my tribute article on the Scarlet Speedster printed in Britain's premier fanzine, *Fantasy Advertiser*. I think we will have to settle for reading our back-issues and hope that, whoever the replacement Sultan of Speed turns out to be his creators can make him a worthy successor.

R.A. Jones's review of the Squadron Supreme comic echoed my own feelings regarding Marvel's general attitude these days. Their policy seems to reflect a grotesque arrogance, as if there is one law for Marvel and another for every other company that dares put out comics. I'm afraid that I hold no regard for Marvel at all any more, for this and other well-publicized reasons.

You asked what readers think of the Deluxe/Lodestone/T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents business. Well, having read a fair bit of the arguments, it is obvious that there has been dishonesty on at least one side, perhaps both. What really annoys me is the fact that anyone should be this dishonest. It kind of tars the whole comic book business with the same unsavory brush, doesn't it? I've no illusions about such activities being rare in this field, it is a business after all, like any other. It simply hits nearer to home. Frankly, I wonder if I'll bother picking up another T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents comic, no matter who publishes it.

Finally, I must agree with fellow countryman Les Chester that Alan Moore's origin for the Phantom Stranger is unlikely to be bettered. The concept of his being a fallen angel would make for a fascinating series, wouldn't it? So long as Alan wrote it, that is.

I'm glad that *AH* is arriving over here on a somewhat more regular basis than in recent months. It is the best US fanzine available and the months are that much longer without my regular "fix" of *Amazing Heroes*. Dare I be so trite as to say, "Keep up the good work"?

GARY THOMPSON
Dearborn, MI

JLA Disagreements

AH #79's JLA article was for the most part a well-written and well-researched effort, but there are a couple points I must disagree with Ed Sample on: First, I do not feel Firestorm's admission was all that unprecedented. Did his admission really defy logic any more than did Snapper Carr's or Golden Eagle's? And strange as it may sound, I would put Red Tornado in the same category. I've long believed the JSA's "bumbling sub-human android" and the JLA's "brooding android with an inferiority complex" were actually a growing infant and adolescent respectively, and only the adult body built by T.O. Morrow hid that fact from everyone. I feel that all these novice heroes come under a category of their own, where admission was not based on the criteria of power and experience, but friendship. (And if you want to be technical about it, Firestorm was not just only a high school teenager, but a middle-aged physics professor as well!).

The statement that Atom had no other home outside of the League at the time of his wedding is not strictly true. He had a virtual brief mini-series in SuperTeam Family #11-14 just before Conway took over the League, and without reading it (and Secret Society of SuperVillains #10), much of the Palmer wedding storyline cannot be fully understood. Linda Danvers is obviously present for the same reason that Iris West Allen is, namely they were both kidnapped along with Jean Loring by T.O. Morrow while they addressed a career seminar in S-T #11. (Ironically, not even the Flash and the Atom knew the true identity of Linda Danvers before this adventure. Kara felt saft doffing the civvies while Iris and Jean were unconscious, but evidently the sheer mathematics involved revealed her secret before *JLA #157*). Wonder Woman was evidently present for being in on Jean's final rescue in S-T #14, just as Solivar and Adam (Captain Comet) Blake were also obviously invited for paticipating in the search and rescue somewhere along the line.

T.M. MAPLE
Weston, Ontario, Canada

Don't Start Action Over

It certainly is interesting news as to the possibility/probability of "big names" taking over the creative reins of DC's three best-known heroes: Superman, Batman, and Wonder Woman. The biggest changes would appear to be in store for Superman: John Byrne certainly has some definite and radical alterations in mind. I'm a little bit leery of some of these reported aspects, but I'm willing to grant creative freedom on this and see where it takes us. (Gosh, isn't it just so nice of me to give my permission? Now Mr. Byrne can proceed with a clear conscience. I'm sure!)

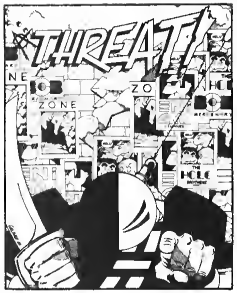
Besides, let's face it: If these modifications really don't work out, things can always be changed back later. However, I have heard it reported elsewhere that DC is going to take at least one irrevocable step as part of this whole deal: they're going to start *Action Comics* afresh, renumbering it at #1.

To me, this is a mistake. *Action Comics* is a comics tradition. It is unique in comicdom in its record of maintaining monthly publication and in featuring the same character in every issue. (Sure, *Detective Comics* started 15 months earlier, but Batman did not appear there until the year after *Action* debuted and, besides, *Tec* has not maintained a monthly schedule throughout its entire run.) For over 47 years, *Action* has been a reliable monthly companion and DC is going to end its run just to please a writer/artist who will probably only be on the mag for 25 years? (Tops!) Tell me it isn't true.

The *X-factor* article was a nice, if brief, look at this new mag. I must say, however, that I am not at all pleased at the return of Jean Grey. I will be interested to see the reaction of fans to this startling development, though for some reason I suspect that any severely negative reactions will be seen in zines like *Amazing Heroes* rather than in any Marvel lettercol. (Call it a crazy hunch. I'd love to be proven wrong on this.) To me, the fact that "Phoenix is not Jean Grey—never was" (as the article so aptly put it) is a major cop-out. Whatever the reason behind her death in *X-Men #137* (And I'm sure we've all heard *that* story a few dozen times before!), it capped a dramatic and heart-rending saga. Now we find that Phoenix was "really" an evil alien entity. So, instead of a classic story of the corruption of a hero and the eventual noble redemption of that hero through personal sacrifice, we merely have the story of a rampaging, muderous alien that was stopped by a sort of "ghost" of Jean Grey's personality. It's not even the typical cavalier treatment of a supposed death that really hurts here. Dark Phoenix was symbolic of the possibility of corruption of something good and, ultimately, the triumph of good over that corrupting force. All of that is invalidated by the alien Phoenix.

Way back when The Mad Maple was a mere sapling (though some people would leave off the "ling" part), I picked up my first issue of *The Rampaging Hulk*. I enjoyed the lead story, but was rather confused by the backup—which just happened to be the concluding episode of the Bloodstone series. I thought it was just me. But now, thanks to R.A., *Jones's article on Bloodstone in AH #83*, I know that the confusion was endemic to the storyline and not just due to me at all! Thanks, R.A.

Illustration by KERRY GAMMILL and SAM DELAROSA character © Marvel Comics Inc.



Bob Mercenary is short. He has a big sword. He works very hard. Can you say "bionically reconstructed?" Can you say "Fectoids?" Do you know why the Fectoids would like to find Bob Mercenary? Would you like the Holo Brothers to come to your birthday party? If you had a unicycle and a lug wrench, would you be a bounty hunter? How many mutants live in the toxic swamps of New Jersey?

You may turn in your answers after you've read the first issue of ***Threat***, due in February. There will be a penalty for tardiness.

FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS

AMAZING READERS

★ *Since learning a bit more about how and why continuity is often changed, I've discovered that the integrity of the story in question is often the last thing the creators take into consideration. Characters are often manipulated in ways that have nothing to do with their character—or the number of copies their title sells.*

Of course, sometimes mistakes, miscalculations, etc. have to be written out of continuity, but frankly, I don't think we should permit what the powers that be do now affect our enjoyment (too much) of a story several years old. Best to forget the X-Factor when you re-read those old issues of The X-Men.

In fact, I like to think enough members of the comics audience are sophisticated enough, whatever their age, just to accept stories, without worrying whether or not every detail concurs with something a weary writer typed at three in the morning to meet a deadline. —*ABC*

JIM JACKSON
Liberty, IN

Byrne Obnoxious

When I first looked into this issue I was very interested in S.J. Getman's report on John Byrne's plans upcoming for *Superman*. In fact, I was at first glad that Mr. Byrne planned to do some major changes with Superman, a character who for years has almost begged to get some new direction and artwork (Curt Swan, if you're reading, I love your *Adventure Comics* work of the '60s, and you belong in Comics Hall of Fame, but Superman needs a change), but after rereading the report, I found Byrne's comments obnoxious toward and ignorant of a history which spans over 40 years.

Byrne makes the comment "as far as I'm concerned, this is the *only* Superman — if you don't read it here, it didn't happen." Really? Who the hell do he think he is? There have been people before him, and there will be people after him who will work on Superman. It seems that Byrne is now certain that he is great, and that what he does is *it* as far as comics go. He plans to ignore some of the most important parts of DC history: no Superboy, no time travel (with the Legion having been inspired by some myth), no Lex-Luthor-as-revenge-filled-genius. (C'mon, John. Luthor was created as a revenge-filled genius. I liked Hackman's Lex, too, but just because the movies played him that way doesn't make it right. Hell, in the *Superman* movies, Superman possessed telekinesis, and in *Superman II*, red Kryptonite removed the evil Kryptonians' powers! Is Byrne going to go along with these, too?) If Byrne doesn't want Superman to travel through time, then he just doesn't have to deal with it, but it isn't necessary to completely eliminate it from the mythos.

And he even has the audacity to ignore any changes concerning Superman from the monumental *Crisis* series, and to demand that his *Superman* start with issue #1. And DC really wants him to do *Superman*! Art-wise, his stuff would be some of the best ever to grace *Superman*, and even his writing would be great (his work on the *Fantastic Four* is the best it's seen in years), but how can he believe he has the right to ignore 40 years? Is DC deciding to say "to hell with continuity and history, let's get Superman to pass *X-Men* and *Teen Titans* in sales?" That would be just fine if it happens, but it should happen because the comic is well crafted, not just because John Byrne's name graces the credits.

The only parts of Byrne's new ideas I agreed with is that Superman's strength and invulnerability will not be so ... powerful. I also have no gripe with Clark's working as a feature writer instead of an anchorman, with Byrne's not having a romantic relationship between Clark and Lois, with humans being "nervous" about Superman. These changes really don't interfere with Superman's history: Clark could simply have changed jobs, going back to the newspaper; he could possess some latent genetic defect; or perhaps the gravity has increased to cause his powers to weaken, and it has always been easy to accept that not everyone feels comfortable with a super alien living on earth. My gripe is that Byrne plans just to ignore and reinterpret the history. What does he plan to do concerning the Justice league, and Superman's relationships with other heroes? God help them all.

I'm glad that Byrne has a lot of enthusiasm for doing *Superman*, it's the one from which all the others follow. The only problem with doing *Superman* is that he has so much history and that the history is untouchable—I'm sure that Byrne realizes that each comic has untouchable history—it's just a fact of comics, just as it is with people—you can't deny what happened to make you what you are, be it good or bad, or both. Byrne appears bound and determined to do just that, and I really can't see how or why DC wants him to do that. In fact, I found some of his remarks concerning DC to be quite insulting: "DC's been changing the facts about characters for 50 years ... I really don't want to ... but now maybe I'll have to put a reference to *Crisis* in *Superman*." It's almost as if Byrne is above DC and what they've done, but he's not, no matter what he thinks. And I'm sure that Dick Giordano knows that, too. Even though I'm an outsider to the world of comic publishing, I can't see DC going through with all of Byrne's changes, unless they're saying to hell with 40 years worth of history.

★ *I'm sure John has answers to many of your questions, Jim. I personally don't think the character, ultimately, will continue as fresh as John wants, but what do I know? I just read the stuff.*

By the way, DC approached many other writers and artists in a long search for a version of Superman before they announced in a long search for a new version of Superman before they announced the deal with Byrne. The new Superman *(which is a lot like the old* Superman*—incidentally, the very old one) has been in the works for some time.* —*ABC*

Illustration by ADAM STOLLER; characters ... First Comics Inc. & Howard Chaykin Inc.

by Scott McCloud

Small press is a catch all term for comics with low enough print runs that any profit is negligible. Many are photocopied and all titles listed here are in black and white on white paper unless otherwise noted. Page count *includes covers*.

To order any of the items on this page just send a short note with your name and address on it listing the comic(s) you want and enclose your payment. Cash is fine and recommended on small orders but make sure it doesn't show through the envelope. Also tape down any loose change. The address for each item appears at the beginning of its review. Please *do not* try to order from me or from *Amazing Heroes*.

I'll indicate postage on each item. "Ppd" = post-paid (price includes postage). Stamps unless otherwise noted should be the regular 22¢ first class type.

Letters of comment are welcomed by just about everyone and if you have comics of your own, trades can often be arranged. You're welcome to send them to me too. I can only review a fraction of what comes out, but I'll definitely read it and try to respond with a postcard at least. You can reach me at PO box 698, Tarrytown, NY 10591-0698. (Comments about this column should be sent to *AH* as usual.)

—SCOTT McCLOUD

All art 1988 Rick Geary except where indicated

Rick Geary's "MINI-BOOKS," sets 2 and 3.
Set 2 includes NIGHT HEAT, AMERICAN MOTELS, and SAN DIEGO TRANSIT. Set 3 includes FAREWELL TO CHARLIE CHAPLIN and THE SHOPPING MALL BOOK.
Sets 2 and 3 together are $2.00 and two stamps. (Separately, each set is $1.25 and a stamp.) Rick Geary, P.O. Box 99635, San Diego, CA 92109.

Dale Luciano was right on target in his "Newave Comix Survey" for The Comics Journal when he called Rick Geary "a true American original." Whatever else I might tell you about the guy, nothing is more central to Geary's work than those two qualities: it's very original and it's *very American*.

Geary is one of a few dedicated souls who have broken through to the "professional market" but still find time to spend on the distinctly unprofitable world of self-published mini-comics. His catalogue of 14 reasonably priced minis (with another two sold out) is broken into five sets of two to three minis each. I'm suggesting sets two and three but be sure to ask for his complete listing.

Geary's "mini-books" range from 16 to 32 pages and from 1" x 1½" (!) to 4¼" x 5½". All are offset quality on white or beige stocks.

The Shopping Mall Book is a 13-page comic book walking tour of a modern day shopping mall. Each full-page panel shows a different view of the mall including such sights as a family shoe display, a denim clothing store, and a generic cylindrical trash barrel. Rather than trying to glorify his subjects, Geary simply documents them. The magic that hovers around his work isn't in the drawing technique—as good as that is—but rather in the way that Geary presents everyday objects in a new context and helps us to see them as if for the first time.

Farewell to Charlie Chaplin, like *Shopping Mall*, devotes much space to seemingly irrelevant details but it does have a plot of sorts. *Farewell* concerns a pair of Bulgarian immigrants living in Switzerland who dig up the body of Charlie Chaplin and demand a ransom. Each page includes a photo of Chaplin himself, usually a still from one of his films. The contract between Chaplin's lifetime of achievements and his graverobbers' bland worthlessness is never forced but works slowly on the reader becoming funnier and more moving with each reading.

The other "books" include: *Night Beat*, the chillingly funny mini-comic which was reprinted in *RAW 2*; *San Diego Transit*, featuring a very unusual bus ride; and *American Motels* featuring, well... American motels. Rick Geary isn't an easy artist to get used to, but he's worth the effort, especially when there are so few "originals" to go around.

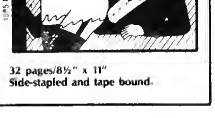
2 random panels (i.e., pages) from SAN DIEGO TRANSIT.

AARRGH #1 by Ken Struck.
$2.00 ppd. from Ken Struck, 87 Waldren Avenue, Glen Rock, NJ 07452. Mature readers.

One of the healthiest influences on small press is almost certainly Art Spiegelman, both on his own and through *RAW* magazine, as co-editor with Françoise Mouly. Ken Struck is one of many comics artists apparently spurred on by Spiegelman's example (with the added influence of having been a student in Spiegelman's comics course at Manhattan's School of Visual Arts).

Struck's *AARRGH* contains several features of varying lengths and *widely* varying styles, but all of them are geared for laughs. The lead story, "Labyrinth of Monsters," is so deliberately crude and shlocky it makes *Plan 9 From Outer Space* look like High Art by comparison. It takes a while to get in sync with, but it can be very funny taken the right way. The humor in Struck's stick-figure comic-strip "Footles" is even better than "Labyrinth," though in a sharper, more unsettling way.

Not all of the crudeness in Struck's work is deliberate, and his lack of more conventional drawing skills may cause him problems at some later date. He may also have to work a bit harder to escape Spiegelman's shadow (one piece called "Coffee Nervous" cops several bits from Spiegelman's *Breakdowns* anthology), but with the imminent release of *AARRGH #2*, he may already have approved in both departments. As with most small artists, Struck isn't likely to stand still for long.



32 pages/8½" x 11"
Side-stapled and tape bound.

Coming in APRIL From
FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS

The Collector's Series of the Year!
JOHN BYRNE CLASSICS #1

Before Superman. The FF. This Is Your X-Men.

Straight as it may not seem, John Byrne's career began with a series of cult artist in comics. JOHN BYRNE's *Doomsday +1* promised to be the first mini in the new Marvel Graphic Novel series, but success often turns in deceptive.

John Byrne Classics will reprint the entire six issue run of the series, including the first time only previously appeared in black and white—all beautifully recolored by MARK WHITE, TILEY and KATHRYN WAYER. It's seven complete stories, all written and drawn by Byrne. The first issue sports a back cover by NEIL ADAMS and a new *Dingod* short story by J.N. STANDARD and Kevin Nowlan. Note: *Doomsday* and on this book will be taken on a strictly first come, first serve basis.

John Byrne Classics #1 32 pages, color, full colors, side-stapled, by Byrne. *April $2.00 (Canada $2.75)*

JOHN BYRNE CLASSICS

AMAZING HEROES #94: Alan Moore's Watchmen
AMAZING HEROES #95: Marvel Productions

Going, going, gone! Hello and bye! Amazing Heroes [illegible] issue #94 and #95 (DC-long twisted tale, and Marvel's [illegible]) are sold out. Only a few copies of each issue remain. Don't miss out on the last issues of AMAZING HEROES! DAVE GIBBONS [illegible] Steve Bissette, Stan Sakai, Steve Rude, [illegible] Bob Rozakis, Mike Baron, Jim Lee, Jim Starlin, Jim Shooter, Jim Valentino, Jim Mooney, Jim Lawrence, Jim Aparo, Jim Steranko, Jim Salicrup, Jim Owsley

TOMORROW'S COPS... BUILT TO KILL

ELECTRIC WARRIOR*

BY DOUG MOENCH AND JIM BAIKIE

A NEW CONTINUING DELUXE FORMAT SERIES FROM DC COMICS

COMING YOUR WAY IN FEBRUARY

DC

*INDICATES TM OF DC COMICS 1985